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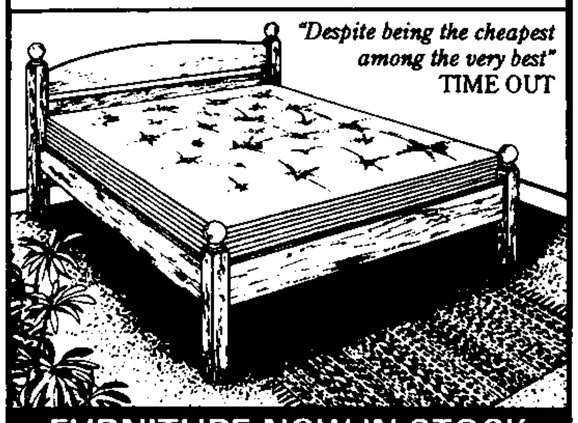

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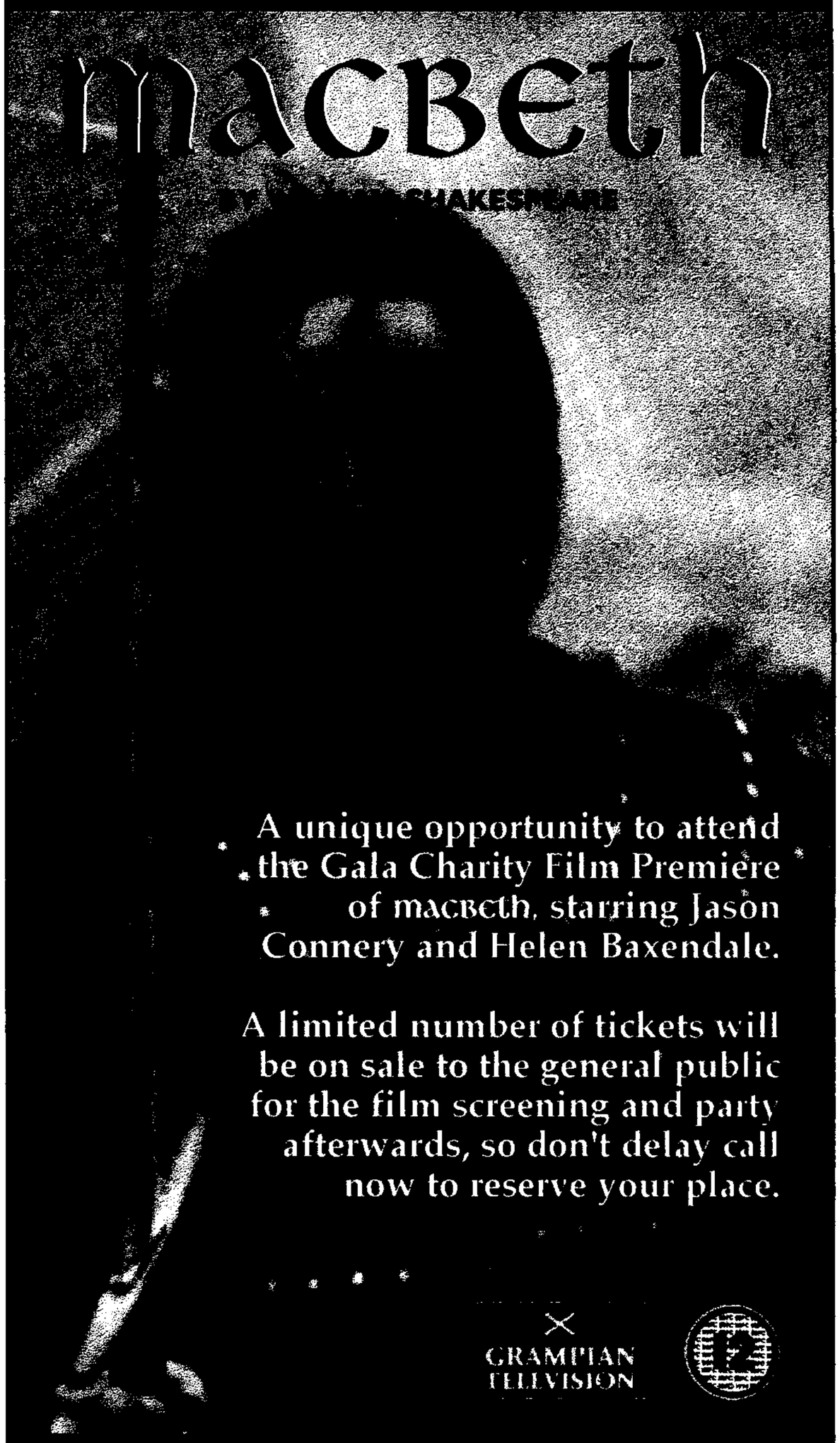

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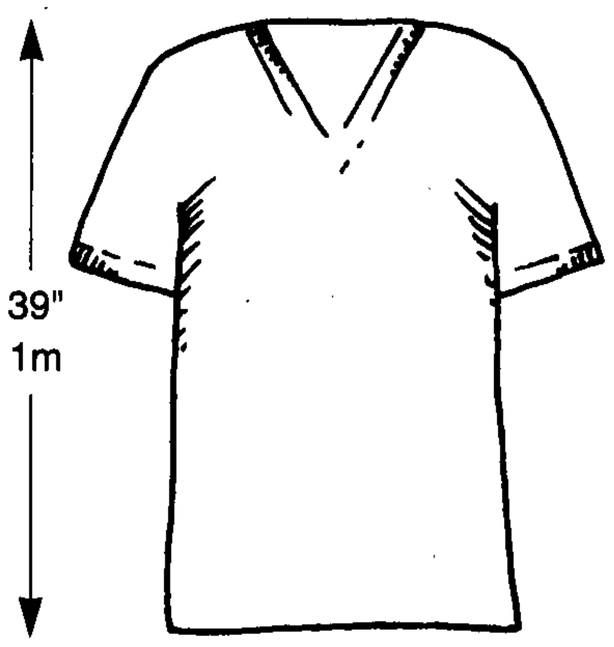

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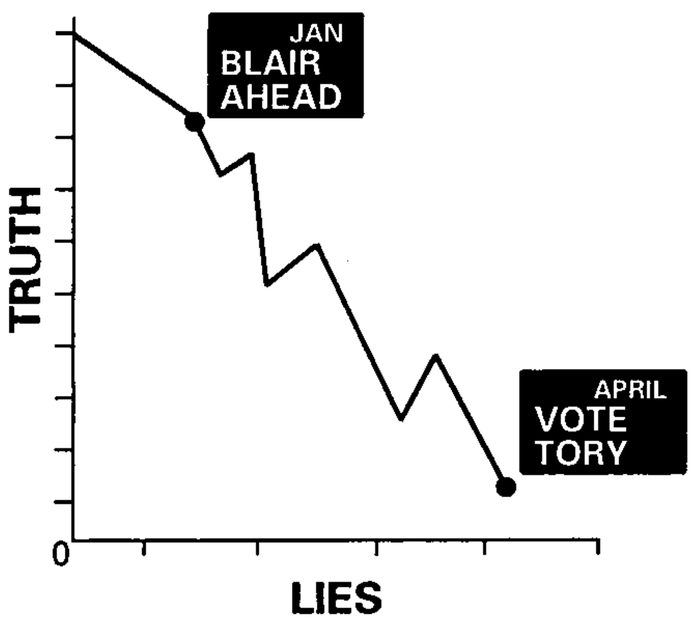

LABOUR's hopes of a general election victory were utterly destroyed yesterday when a new poll revealed that their support had sunk to a disastrous new low. Blair's ailing party is now only a dismal twenty points ahead of the freshly invigorated Conservative Party, whose support has remained firmly unchanged.

There is now nothing for Tony Blair to do except admit defeat with a good grace and wish the Tories the best of luck.

Labour, he *must* realise, are finished. They have run out of ideas. They are finished. They have run out of ideas. They are finished. They have run out of ideas. They are finished.

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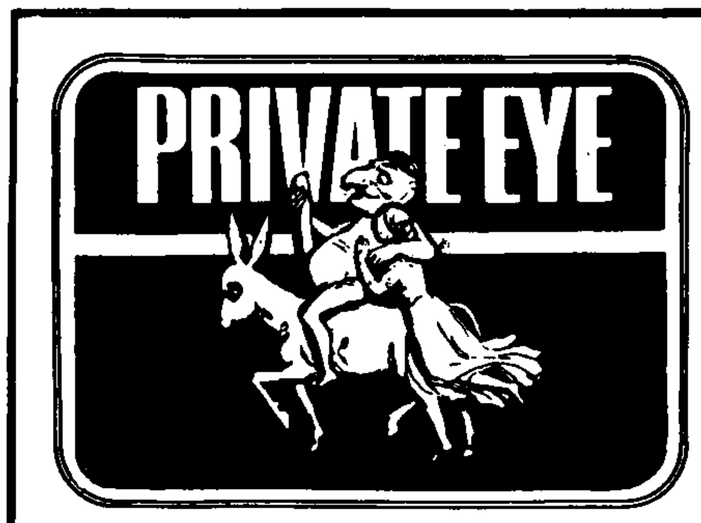


QUOTE OF THE CAMPAIGN

"Our first priority is to create jobs. This is not just an economic priority, but also a social and a moral one." — Conservative manifesto, page 9

"...governments cannot create jobs..." — Conservative manifesto, page 10

SECTION

JOHN MAJOR is desperate to direct the election campaign away from sleaze, but documents leaked to the *Eye* suggests the sleaze trail leads to the prime minister's very own constituency office in Huntingdon.

Mr Major's constituency agent Peter Brown took personal gifts — including champagne and tickets for Wimbledon on finals day — along with party donations, from a diamond dealer and lobbyist called Willie Nagel.

The Huntingdon Conservative Association charged Nagel £10,000 for "political briefings and information" between 1993 and 1994. Nagel twice contributed £5,000 in sponsorship for Huntingdon Conservative Association functions in 1992 — an opera and concert evening and a victory ball shortly after Major's general election triumph. Nagel also befriended Tory agents by sponsoring the *Conservative Agents Journal* in 1994, a snip at £800.

Nagel owns a political lobbying firm called Punchline and is also an official diamond broker for De Beers. His Romanian Jewish background gives him a wealth of contacts in eastern Europe and Israel. He encouraged a meeting between Mr Major and the Czechoslovakian prime minister, and urged Mr Major to visit the diamond exchange in Israel on his official trip to the country.

Nagel regards himself as John Major's personal friend. But the compliment is not always returned. When he called Major at home, in August 1994, he was denied access. Nagel wrote angrily to the prime minister afterwards complaining that he had been regarded as a "telephone trespasser".

"I was desperately trying to inform you that Andrew Stone, a very able new Managing Director of Marks & Spencer with whom I have business dealings had requested me — using my Punchline connections — to try and arrange a private lunch or meeting between himself and Tony Blair," he wrote. The subsequent media furore about Marks & Spencer's relationship with Blair meant Nagel felt he had been justified in trying to ring the prime minister. "I telephoned you at home and spoke to James [Major] asking him pointedly whether he had met Andrew Stone... on his advice I tried to reach you at No 10."

A Huntingdon Conservative Association briefing, dated that same month, recognised the Nagel "problem". "His persistence along with his ability to never take no for an answer is wearing in the extreme, which is part of the cause of the relationship souring," it read. But the briefing note to Mr Major said that Nagel was also "tremendously helpful in talking to Lord Rothermere [proprietor of Associated Newspapers] during the period when Simon Heffer [*Daily Mail* columnist] was doing his worst for you".

Nagel enjoyed a much more courteous relationship with Peter Brown than with No 10, as Brown's letters to Nagel reveal. One letter from Brown, dated 7 January 1992, read: "I am writing to thank you most sincerely for the magnum of champagne that was awaiting Antonia and I on our arrival back from holiday."

Another letter from Brown to Nagel on 7 July 1992 read: "On behalf of Antonia and myself I write to thank you for your kindness in arranging for us to have tickets for Wimbledon Finals Day last Saturday."

Earlier in 1992 Brown wrote to Nagel: "Can I take this opportunity once again of thanking you most sincerely for your hospitality last week. I greatly enjoyed meeting you in excellent surroundings."

The *Eye* asked Peter Brown whether Willie Nagel had donated money to the Huntingdon Tories. He replied: "I couldn't possibly comment." When he was asked if Nagel had sponsored Huntingdon Tory functions, he said: "We have many patrons who help the party with advertising and things like that, but it is not our policy to comment on them."

AS WATER companies begin their annual whinge about the worst drought ever, their ancient water pipes are leaking nearly as much water as they deliver — but this won't stop the company chairman having another fat year.

Yorkshire Water chairman Brandon Gough, for example, has learnt nothing about public relations from his unwashed predecessor, Sir Gordon Jones. He has decided that he has time to spare from his £120,000-a-year post and has agreed to become chairman of banknote printing firm De La Rue in July — the ultimate licence to print money.

This will be Gough's fourth job: he is already chairman of both the Higher Education Funding Council and the Doctors and Dentists Pay Review Body. But Yorkshire Water customers and shareholders who fear they might not be getting 100 percent attention from their chairman are being reassured that Mr Gough is keeping in touch with their views — from home in Suffolk 200 miles away.

REMEMBER the Tories' doomladen "New Labour, Euro Danger" campaign poster, the one showing a British lion with a solitary red tear rolling down its cheek?

The poster, which was supposed to remind voters that the Conservative party stands for national pride, the sovereign nation, etc, was, er, sent away for printing by a firm called Immagine Pubblicita — an Italian company in the dreaded European Union.

- ***Hallo! to Lord Archer & Princess Di*** *7*
- ***Election Special*** ..... *8 & 9*
- ***Old Couch Potato*** *10*
- ***Literary Review on Theroux*** *25*
- ***Foot on Sleazy Street*** *27*
- ***Slicker on Hamilton, Aitken & Evans*** *28*

"Have you ever thought, Pinoke, you weren't cut out to be a canvasser?"

Street of Shame

***DAILY TORYGRAPH* editor Charles Moore — now known as "Radio's Charles Moore" in honour of his scintillating performances on the *Today* programme — has worked himself up into a pious frenzy about Martin Bell's intervention in Tatton.**

"It seemed self-evident to many in the media," he complained on Monday, "that Mr Bell was the right man to be an anti-corruption candidate, simply because he is a good journalist. They did not see the arrogance of that assumption, its woeful distance from the views of the public, who think that journalists are at least as despicable as politicians."

This is bad news for at least two members of that "despicable" profession, *Daily Telegraph* political hacks Boris Johnson and Julie Kirkbride — who are both now standing as Tory candidates.

WITH great effort the *News of the World* produced a "shock" survey purporting to show that 52.5 percent of middle Englanders in Basildon were intending to vote Labour — or TRUE BLUE BASILDON TURNS ON THE TORIES, as the rag put it.

The *Screws* did not commission a professional poll to get these "stunning" results: it sent local hack Vanessa Large and some news agency bods to question voters. But it proved difficult for them to find 1,000 people who would talk as local blue rinses did their best to dodge the seedy hacks.

Eventually they found an audience who didn't object to answering questions — a stream of people leaving Towngate Theatre. It was only after dozens of them had responded that Large noticed how all were Labour supporters... not surprising as they were leaving the local constituency Labour party's weekly meeting.

So the hacks did what all hacks do in an emergency: they went to a pub where they conducted an extremely scientific and in-depth poll, reaching the conclusion that Basildon would probably vote Labour.

QUESTION: Why did the chicken cross the road? Because *Evening Standard* editor Max "Hitler" Hastings was rampaging after it with a shotgun.

Max's luxury Wiltshire farmhouse near Hungerford backs on to a farmyard belonging to the Chilton Estates. Recently, farm drugs salesman Kelvin Linsley was with a party of young people, feeding and grooming calves in the yard, when they were startled by gunfire and dived for cover.

The children, some as young as 11, then saw a chicken spurting blood and attempting to cross the road. "Hitler" then emerged, brandishing his weapon. "Bloody thing!" he explained. "Shouldn't have tried to scratch my lawn seed."

Happily the chicken survived: it's not just high pheasants Hastings can't hit.

STARVED of any real news stories, education correspondents from the Sunday papers have combined to fight the might of the spin doctors who are keeping a tight lid on education despite its importance as an election issue.

The "Sunday group" of reporters intends to invite important education figures to meetings to tell them of their aim of keeping the spin merchants out of education. But unfortunately even their inaugural meeting was not a success.

Chris Woodhead, the chief inspector of schools, was the first to be invited. He replied that he would be delighted to attend such a meeting... but only if the *Observer*'s Martin Bright *would* not be there (Bright's stories criticising Woodhead's statistics-gathering methods had not been appreciated).

The disgruntled hacks believed Woodhead missed the point: he was refusing to go to the meeting designed to iron out political control because he was not allowed to control who would be attending.

HEIDI KINGSTONE, estranged wife of David "Rommel" Montgomery, emerged from hiding to attend a "breakfast briefing" for hacks and PR types last Friday. "I've just discovered from my father-in-law," she told fellow-guests, "that David and his girlfriend had a baby two years ago."

A monstrous allegation, of course, which Montgomery has done his utmost to keep out of the papers with fusillades of solicitors' letters. Perhaps he will now have to take out an injunction against his own wife to ensure that this vile calumny is never repeated.

After the breakfast meeting, Heidi sidled up to keynote speaker Ian Hargreaves, who was sacked by Rommel as editor of the *Indie*. "David hates you," she cheerfully informed him. "He can't stand intellectuals!"

HACKS camped outside Blake's Hotel last week for the honeymoon of Liam Gallagher and Patsy Kensit (*Who they? Ed.*) had little to report since the happy couple were far too busy a-boozin' and a-bonkin' to speak to the press. But then an upstairs window opened and out came two male hands, each flicking a V-sign.

Sensation! The *Daily Star* filled half its front page with a photo of Gallagher's four-fingered gesture, under the headline "Did You REALLY Manage 4, Liam?" The *Mirror* was so excited it described the event two days running.

The account in the *Sun*, whose showbiz hack Dominic Mohan had smuggled himself into the hotel, was rather different. "One fellow hotel guest," Mohan revealed, "tried to fool waiting pressmen that he was Liam — by giving a V-sign from an upper window."

Who might this impostor be? Step forward, er, Dominic Mohan.

No one who knows them doubts that the Thatchers have a deep and successful marriage and that Sir Denis has kept his end up despite all the obvious complications.
Grauniad

ASSOCIATED Newspapers boss Sir David English is delighted by his appointment as chairman of ITN — whose editor, Nigel Dacre, happens to be the brother of *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre.

"I've got the Dacre boys under my thumb!" Sir David has been gloating. "Now they both have to answer to me!"

This comment has greatly displeased Paul Dacre. For some inexplicable reason, he does not like to be reminded that he is a mere hired hand.

THE paper's editor, Richard "Monk" Addis, may not have come out in favour of Tony Blair, but he has accomplished more U-turns than the "new" Labour leader.

One of his more brilliant coups was to dump his showbiz department, "shedding" its staff and creating a new section called *Preview*, edited by a desperately overworked staff of three. Last week Addis sacked the *Preview* department and brought back... Showbiz! He appointed a young sports reporter as editor and rehired David Wigg, the editor he had "shed" only months before. As they say on Broadway: that's Fleet Street.

ROY GREENSLADE, ubiquitous media expert, writes in the *Grauniad* that Albania was always a "romantic reality" which attracted poets, anthropologists, linguists, sociologists and militarists, "all drawn to wonder at the European land which time seemed to have passed by".

He says he studied its history and politics at university and read every book about the country. There was one other group drawn to the country — though Greenslade omits to mention them. These were the young British zealots who regarded Enver Hoxha's regime as the last true bastion of unsullied Communism. Prominent among them was a young comrade from Sussex University named, er, Roy Greenslade.

"I agreed it was off the record – but you can't tell the truth all the time"

ALTHOUGH happy to shell out $2.5m for pictures of Michael Jackson's baby, the pisspoor *OK!* magazine — owned by pornographer Richard "Filth" Desmond — is rather more parsimonious with its other expenditure. Hence the ceaseless quest for freebies by *OK!* contributor William "Freeloader" Hall, a former *Sunday Express* hack with a legendary appetite for the good things in life.

On his second Laker Air freebie this year, "Freeloader" really outdid himself on arriving in Florida. At the Abbey Hotel in trendy South Miami Beach, he negotiated a rate of $85 a night as opposed to the usual $125, with the usual bullshit about doing a travel piece and featuring the hotel. The locally-based *OK!* photographer, Gerry Davis, dutifully took snaps of the hotel manager.

Next stop was a meeting with Tara "Queen of the Night" Solomon, a well-known columnist for the *Miami Herald*, who invited Freeloader and his snapper to meet her at a reception being given at "My Martini", a watering hole for models. The Freeloader cheerfully downed champagne like water and then invited Tara, her young male pal and the photographer to dinner with the seldom-heard words "It's on me".

Dinner was washed down with copious amounts of wine, much of it consumed by the tireless Freeloader. Fifteen drinks later, and around bill-paying time, he began to fumble in his shoulder bag. Despite his best efforts, however, nothing appeared to be coming out. Tara, like a true Queen, announced that her young man would take care of the bill.

Hearing the glad tidings, "Freeloader" attempted to stand, failed and promptly crashed face-first on to the table.

***MIRROR* editor Piers "Boy" Morgan continues to dazzle with his wit and erudition.**

At a recent editorial conference, discussing the very important 15th anniversary of the Andrex Labrador puppy advert, "Boy" went to the heart of the matter. "But is it," he asked, "still the same puppy?"

His legendary deputy editor, Brendon "Chucky" Parsons, also continues to amaze. While the Labour-supporting *Mirror*'s main contribution to the election has been its series of scantily-clad Page Three "Blair's Babes", the paper thought better of an idea from "Chucky". Each babe, he suggested, should appear naked but for a pair of hot pants with Blair's face stuck on the pants.

Too sophisticated, said *Mirror* hacks, for the bashful "Boy".

FORMER *Observer* editor Jonathan Fenby, now running the *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong, is always quick to deny that his editorial policy is influenced by the need to suck up to Communist China.

One wonders, then, how he will feel about the imminent arrival at the *Post* of septuagenarian Communist stooge Feng Xiliang, founder-editor of the pro-Beijing newspaper *China Daily*. Feng has been hired as a "consultant" by the *Post*'s owner, Robert Kwok — who has extensive business interests on the mainland — to keep an eye on coverage of the colony's handover to Chinese rule.

To ensure that Fenby takes the hint, Feng has installed himself in a room right next door to the editor's office.

JUSTICE

AT HIS packed press conference on 8 April, Sir Frederick Crawford, chairman of the new criminal cases review commission, was asked about the case of James Hanratty, who was hanged in 1962 for the A6 murder.

He replied that the papers about the case had not been received from the home office. "They are lagging behind the others," he explained. "When they come... the last documents recommending to the minister some form of decision about the case will not be in the files."

None of the hacks present realised the significance of this curious statement, and the subject was dropped. But Sir Frederick had unwittingly confirmed what is suspected by Hanratty's family: that the civil servants in the home office had made a firm recommendation to home secretary Michael Howard that he should *refer the* case to the court of appeal.

This was the reason for the front page "revelation" in the *Independent* earlier this year that the case would be reopened. It also explains the home office's categorical assurance to the Hanratty family that a decision on the case would definitely be taken by 31 March. The only conceivable reason for the breaking of that promise is that Howard did not have the guts to accept the recommendation or reject it — so he cravenly shuffled it off to the new quango.

A spokesman for the quango confirmed that the Hanratty papers had arrived (on 11 April) and that the recommendations of the civil servants had been "weeded out". Asked why the commission members could not even see the conclusions of the home office officials, the spokesman said: "I suppose it would be seen as possibly prejudicing our independence." Another more convincing explanation is that Howard was so desperate to cover up what his own officials recommended (and his own pusillanimity in reacting to that recommendation) that he ordered the censoring of his own department's documents before they were passed on.

Mr Reeves said that his plan had been to introduce the women before the Lambeth Conference next year. Several dioceses had agreed to host visits, and some bishops were to have the women privately.

Church Times

RECENT problems with the Inland Revenue's self-assessment system should certainly not be blamed on project director Doug Smith.

The computer-generated mailing to the first wave of taxpayers failed to tell them to allow time for cheques to clear. This meant 20,000 people then wrongly received interest demands for late payment.

The system is of course running over time and over budget, but this cannot be blamed on the project director — just as the officers who were in charge of tax inspector Michael Allcock, who lived it up with free holidays and call girls paid for by the taxpayers he was investigating, cannot be blamed for not knowing what was going on. Officers like, er, Doug Smith.

HALLO! THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN

HALLO! MARTIN Bell, Tatton's craggy Mr Clean who has now had to admit that he had an extra-marital affair 100 years ago, was already the victim of prurient investigations into his private life *before* he offered himself as the nation's saviour, I can reveal.

On his return from Bosnia, where he was a mere BBC war correspondent, there was an absurd rumour that the man in the white suit was discussing Ugandan dialects with his translator. Naturally, for such an august personage the *Sun* sent its top royal snapper Arthur Edwards to snoop. When the resourceful Arfur spotted Bell heading towards his local pub with a woman, he called out: "Oi, Mr Bell — is that your new girlfriend?"

Whereupon the great man replied, gravely: "No. She is a lawyer with the International War Crimes Commission." And so she was!

HALLO! *MEANWHILE the disgraced former trade minister Neil "Envelopes" Hamilton has been given a clear vote of confidence by the Macclesfield Chamber of Commerce — even if everyone else thinks he'll be chucked out by his Tatton constituents on 1 May.*

Hamilton has been invited as the chamber's guest speaker for its annual dinner on 9 May. But just in case the disgraced Hamilton is no longer an MP there are two possible stand-bys. Nicholas and Ann Winterton, two Tories rather more likely to keep their seats, are also on the guest list.

HALLO! WHERE oh where is Lord Archer, people constantly ask me, just when his country needs him?

Well, the great storyteller has been in South Africa, behaving just as you would expect: an impeccable ambassador. At Cape Town airport, Jeffrey produced a silver British Airways pass to the cabin class lounge and demanded entry to the first class.

The lady on duty, who clearly did not recognise the suntanned novelist, explained he did not have the right pass for first class. His lordship announced that he was not used to such treatment and stormed off. Later, an agitated Jeffrey was seen shouting excitedly into a mobile phone.

South Africans, you see, know nothing of great literature. They only read trash like Wilbur Smith!

HALLO! *THRILLING portents for the storming electoral success we can expect from Sir Jammy Goldsmith's Referendum party: former Tory party chairman Lord "Toad" McAlpine, now a Goldfinger groupie, was recently booked as guest speaker for one of the prestigious "Yorkshire Post Business Breakfasts".*

The gross McAlpine is, of course, plugging his charming memoir Still a Jolly Fatman (Shurely "Once a jolly Bagman"? Ed.) Even so, the Yorkshire public response was overwhelming. Only 11 tickets were bought and the event, for the first time ever, had to be cancelled!

HALLO! SADLY, behind the recent strange behaviour of my gym companion, the Princess of Wales (which erupted in a public attack on a photographer), lies yet another story of heartbreak.

Diana has discovered that her long-time confidant, the *Daily Mail*'s dashing royal correspondent Richard Kay, has contracted a "secret engagement." In the past, the princess has had many exciting assignations in Richard's car, parked in ill-lit London backstreets, where she would pass over royal titbits which would then be recycled the following morning as a "scoop." Richard has been so coy about his engagement for fear of offending Diana, a highly impressionable gel who has grown over-fond of these clandestine car "interviews."

Word, however, has got back to Kensington Palace — for Richard's *fiancée* is Emma Wilkins, a waif-like blonde reporter on the *Times*, where all the secretaries have been buzzing with gossip for weeks about her dazzling new solitaire diamond ring.

Miss Wilkins, an even bigger snob than Diana, achieved brief celebrity last year when she was bitten by a woman in a road rage case. She's been receiving counselling ever since. Just like Diana!

"Just kissing their babies will do"

HALLO! MATTHEW PARRIS, waspish political sketch writer at the *Times*, got very worked up writing about Labour's hot prospect in Exeter, the openly gay candidate Ben Bradshaw.

"Bradshaw is a leggy, fresh-faced, floppy-haired young man with a quick mind, a pleasant manner, a ready smile, a vaunting ambition, unlimited energy, a merry laugh..." gushed Parris, who is famous for living openly as a former Tory MP.

Will Matthew regain his composure — or have Bradshaw's good looks nobbled his acid nib, as it were?

'The Marquesa'

LUVVIES

"I reached a crescendo in my life where I was, mmm... not in a good place. I thought in some way to be a good actress I had to be in a lot of pain. Then it occurred to me that I didn't. I was actually a better actress when I had a life to return to and I could sleep at night. That came from working with people like Meryl Streep on 'House of the Spirits' who can go home at night and also be Meryl Streep and be brilliant. I didn't know that. When you grow up acting you watch your heroes and think they must be in pain to be that good. Actually, that's very ridiculous."

WINONA RYDER
Time Out

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

ELECTION SPECIAL

FORMER Thatcher PPS Gerald Howarth was basking in the reflected glory of the ex-Leaderene last week as he escorted Lady T on a "meet and greet" around his safe Tory seat at Aldershot. This was while knowing that the Referendum party, which his company Taskforce Communications helped to launch, was causing problems up and down the country for his fellow Conservative candidates in more marginal constituencies.

However small the threat from the Referendum party, in the past 12 months many senior Tories — including Lord Archer and Michael Heseltine — have warned that it could damage Tory chances in certain key seats. John Major was even moved to question Bill Cash about his links to Goldsmith, who had to hastily withdraw from funding Cash's European Foundation (Lady Thatcher, generous as ever, sent a cheque to make up the difference.) Why, then, has Howarth escaped scrutiny?

The original computer database for the Referendum party was researched by Christopher Monckton, the bowler-hatted former adviser to Margaret Thatcher. Monckton was forced to distance himself from this activity when it emerged that he was treasurer of Tayside North Conservative Association (Bill Walker's constituency). After this, the press and PR role was taken on by Patrick Robertson at Taskforce — a firm incorporated at Companies House on 4 February 1993 with Lord (Cecil) Parkinson, Gerald Howarth and Patrick Robertson as directors. Robertson, a founder of the Bruges Group, went on to become the party's head of public relations, until being supplanted a few weeks ago by Bernard Shrimsley.

Questions might also be asked about Howarth's connections with another great embarrassment to the Tory party — viz. Neil Hamilton. Howarth and Hamilton are old chums who jointly sued the BBC in the mid-1980s (thanks to a promise to underwrite their legal fees made by, surprise surprise, Sir James Goldsmith). It was Howarth who advised Hamilton to "tough it out" when the *Guardian* started publishing stories about the notorious holiday at the Ritz in Paris. More recently, when Hamilton dropped his lawsuit against the *Grauniad*, several of his friends urged him to resign his seat; but Howarth overruled them, once again telling his beloved Neil to carry on regardless.

The consequences of this advice are all too obvious: the election so far has been dominated by the sleazy shenanigans in Tatton, much to the fury of John Major and his senior colleagues. When Howarth returns to the Commons after polling day, no doubt they will think of some suitable way of rewarding him for sabotaging their campaign.

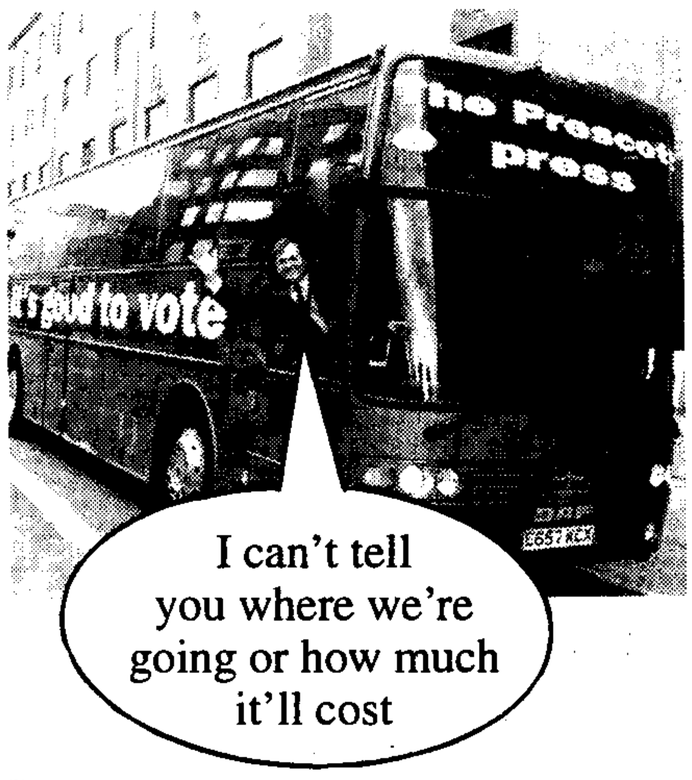
HERITAGE secretary Virginia Bottomley has signed an interesting new recruit as her special adviser: far right-winger John Bercow, who previously advised sadly departed Jonathan Aitken at the treasury.

Bercow's other claims to fame were as a Lambeth councillor and an official at the Confederation of Conservative Students, the banned hardline Thatcherite youth movement. Wet Bottomley's choice of this radical must have been made after seeing plenty of good references supporting this paragon of virtue — so presumably she did not see one from his previous employer, Rowland Sallingsbury Casey, the parliamentary lobbyists.

Bercow worked for them for many years but left citing urgent personal reasons saying he had no job to go to. His kindly employer negotiated a handsome voluntary redundancy package for him, but within just a few weeks Bercow had resurfaced at Aitken's office.

The lobbyists were furious and have now successfully reclaimed some of the redundancy package back from him. Nice to know the nation's heritage is in such an honest pair of hands.

MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

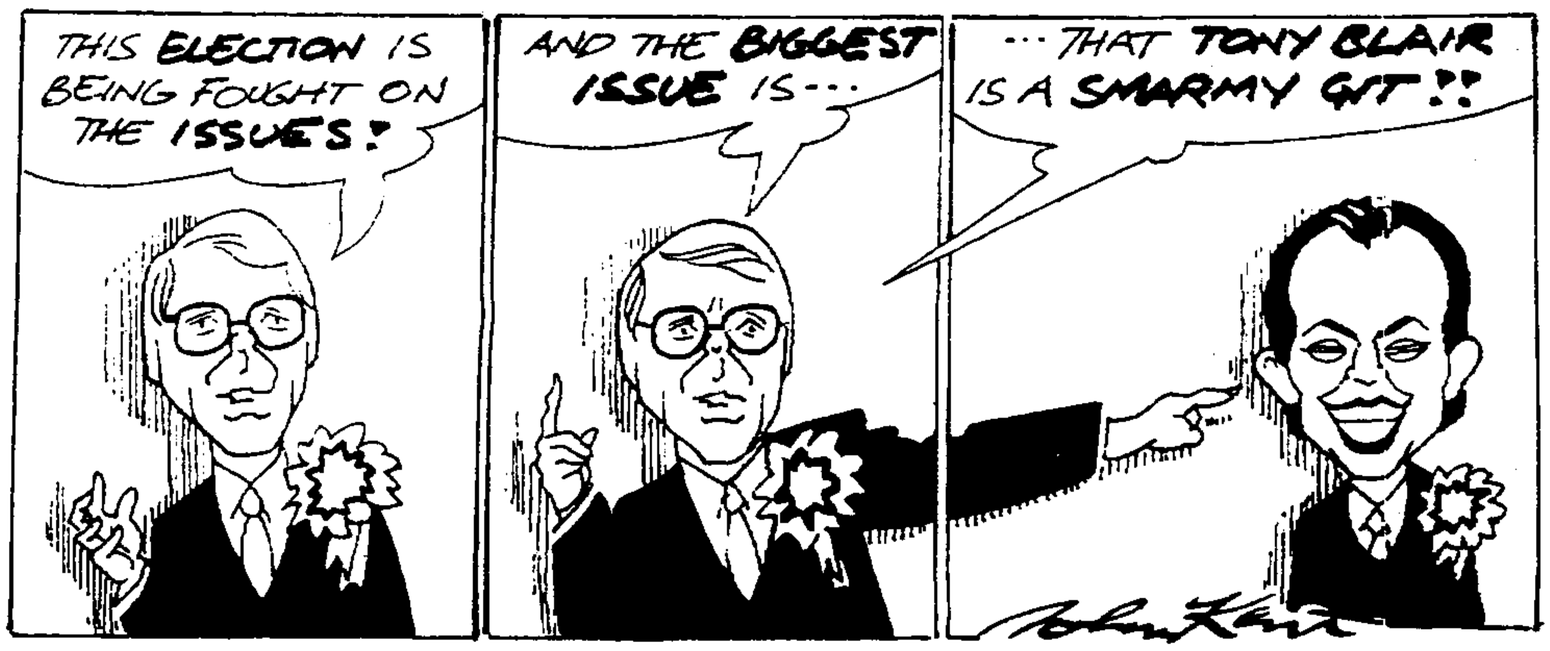


TIM RATHBONE, Tory MP for Lewes, Sussex, stormed into Telscombe village on 10 April with his loudspeakers blaring *Land of Hope and Glory.*

Then he bumped into a Liberal Democrat canvasser who told him he was in the wrong constituency. Telscombe was moved out of Lewes well over a year ago, and is now part of Brighton Kemptown. *Land of Hope and Glory* was turned off and the Tory cavalcade retreated in some disorder.

I-I-I Special

THIS week's Kim Il Sung Award for outstanding self-promotion goes to Great Helmsman Menzies "Ming" Campbell, the Scottish Liberal Democrat MP who isn't Alan Beith or Charles Kennedy. He enlivens four pages of the latest *North East Fife News* **with just 13 photographs of himself.**



EXACTLY a month ago, a front-page story in the *Sunday Times* **revealed that the Tories had received a £500,000 donation from the Hong Kong tycoon C.K. Ma (Ma Ching-kwan), boss of the Oriental Press Group.**

Since then, bizarrely, there has been silence.

If anything, the *ST* underestimated Ma's intimate relationship with the Conservative party in Britain. As well as having Tories such as David Mellor and Terry Dicks on the payroll of his Oriental Press Group, and employing Sir Tony Durant as a paid director of his Oriental Press Charitable Fund Association, his generosity also extended to buying a printing plant in Reading for the party in 1994.

At about the same time, he feted Hong Kong governor Chris Patten — a former Tory party chairman — at a lavish party in the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Hong Kong, to celebrate the launch of Ma's English-language paper *The Eastern Express*. This might be fine and dandy but for two things: first, where the Mas' money came from, and second, how Ma has behaved as a press baron.

The Mas' family fortune came from hard drugs. The Oriental Press Group was founded in the 1960s while Ma's uncle (Ma Sik-yu) and father (Ma Sik-chun) were earning a fortune in the heroin trade. His father was charged with drug-trafficking in 1977 and fled to Taiwan — where his uncle, nicknamed "White Powder Ma", died a fugitive from justice in 1992.

There is no evidence to suggest that C.K. Ma has ever been involved in the heroin trade. Nevertheless, questions should still be asked about the judgment of prominent politicians who fawn over him — including John Major, who has entertained Ma at Downing Street on several occasions.

In recent years Ma has discovered a Maxwellian appetite for litigation, using writs to gag the slightest criticism: he is thought to have about 30 or 40 lawsuits outstanding. OPG reporters have also been used to harass those who even think of making any public comment on C.K. Ma. When the *South China Morning Post* — owned by rival press baron Robert Kwok — carried a very bland story about the Ma brothers that happened to mention their colourful background, hacks from Ma's Oriental Press Group were immediately assigned to stake out Kwok's house.

What puzzles hacks in Hong Kong is the British media's lack of interest. Last month's *Sunday Times* story has not been followed up anywhere — even in the *Sunday Times*. While American papers such as the *Washington Post* are energetically exposing Clinton's far-eastern backers, Fleet Street's finest seem unable or unwilling to investigate the man who is now one of John Major's largest single benefactors. Why?

LABOUR's new enthusiasm for privatisation will inevitably lead to the sale of lucrative ministry of defence property, a process already well advanced under the Tories — to the chagrin of the people affected.

When defence secretary Michael Portillo was asked about Deal Marines Barracks, home to the Royal Marines for two centuries and now up for grabs, an underling at the Defence Estate Organisation replied on his behalf. The minion said nothing to allay the fears of locals that plans for a retail and business park at the barracks are being pushed through without proper consultation.

He said the successful bidder is working closely with the local planning authority and English Heritage to decide how development should take place. He also noted that the bidder had "canvassed the views of local community groups".

The residents were furious about this. The bidder had had just three inconclusive meetings with the local planning authority, and as the barracks steering committee put it: "You seem to be unaware that, though English Heritage is responsible for the listing of historic buildings, it is the local planning authority which is responsible for granting listed building consents."

Contrary to Portillo's minion, only the committee and local Labour party had surveyed the views of community groups. Both surveys show strong opposition to the "unimaginative housing and retail concept" planned by Portillo's chosen bidder.

ON THE HUSTINGS

WHAT can explain the smile on the face and spring in the step of Hywel Williams, director of the Conservatives 2000 Foundation? Could it be that his boss, John Redwood, has finally delivered the rabbit punch to Michael Portillo's leadership prospects that his space cadet supporters have been waiting for all these months?

Though Angela Browning's election address scooped the headlines with its unexpected and most unministerial hostility to single-currency arrangements, it is Redwood's which has exploded like a grenade in the faces of his former cabinet colleagues. By revealing that he had opposed in cabinet all the most catastrophic and unpopular policies of the Major administration — the ERM, high interest-rates, VAT on fuel, etc, Redwood has laid all ministers open to inquisition about their own roles in these various fiascos.

Portillo was the first victim: caught in a media ambush he put up a pisspoor performance. First he claimed to have been too young and junior to have had any say in such high matters of state. Then when it was pointed out that he was chief secretary to the treasury at the time, he declared roundly that he supported everything the government has done. Then his body language began to shout: "Look, my tongue is firmly in my cheek and I've got my fingers crossed."

Michael Howard, Malcolm Rifkind, Stephen Dorrell and anyone else fancying their chances as Tory leader will also have some explaining to do. John Major's friends have become so desperate that they've been test-marketing a truly astonishing plea in mitigation — that the prime minister, himself, *didn't* really agree with any of these policies but was led astray by unsavoury types like Norman Lamont and Ken Clarke.

The other unsettling thought provoked by Redwood's election address is that, like Richard Crossman, he must have been keeping a diary recording what all his rivals said in cabinet. Either Redwood will become leader of the Conservative party, or he will publish. Many top Tories are finding it hard to decide which would be worse.

'Urquhart'

LORDS FOR HIRE

ONE aspect of sleaze overlooked by Lord Nolan in his inquiry concerns the lobbying activities of his fellow peers in the "upper" chamber.

Lords must declare outside financial interests as "a matter of honour", but they are not governed by any strict rules and do not face any sanction for failing to disclose the identity of any paymaster.

Much disquiet has been expressed over peers who leave the government and then join the very companies with whom they were intimately involved as a minister, or familiar with as a spokesperson in the Lords. The *Eye* has discovered the following cases which, according to the Lords' register, "involve payment or other incentive or reward for providing parliamentary services".

● **Earl of Arran**, former junior environment minister who now advises the Institute of Waste Management.

● **Lord Gray of Contin**, former minister of state at energy and government energy spokesperson in the Lords, now a consultant to Scottish Nuclear Ltd.

● **Baroness Hooper**, former junior health minister, now a director of General Healthcare Group plc, SmithKline Beecham plc and Medical Defence Union Ltd.

● **Viscount Ullswater**, former minister of state at environment responsible for planning and construction, now a member of British Nuclear Fuels Ltd Environment Council and director of Rank Leisure.

Then, of course, there are those peers who were once at the very heart of government:

● **Lord Bramall**, former chief of the defence staff who is now a director of Vickers Defence Systems.

● **Baroness Hogg**, former head of the prime minister's policy unit and one of John Major's closest advisers, is now a director of GKN plc (arms manufacturer), The Energy Group plc and an international adviser to Bankinter and National Westminster Bank.

TORY TIME

JOHN MAJOR's best friend in the Commons, Robert Atkins MP, is revealed as one of two former ministers who were secret informants in an abortive police investigation into Labour politicians that has cost at least £10m.

Defence lawyers examining documents in three failed prosecutions have discovered entries on a Lancashire police computer in which the names of two "sensitive" police informers have been blotted out by the crown prosecution service. But the informant codenamed "R2AX" is clearly Lord Blaker, formerly Sir Peter Blaker, a foreign office minister: in an error by the CPS, part of his address in St Annes, Lancashire, was not deleted. And in another report coded "R6C", the second informant is easily identifiable as Robert Atkins, who resigned as countryside minister in 1995 and organised John Major's campaign for the Tory leadership.

The documents show that the two ex-ministers pressed the supposedly non-political CPS to reopen a 1980s corruption investigation into the Labour-run council at Preston.

Yet more than two years earlier, on 1 November 1989, the then director of public prosecutions, Allan Green, assured former home secretary David Waddington that the allegations had already been investigated and dismissed. "I have now received reports from the Chief Crown Prosecutors for Derbyshire and for Lancashire/Cumbria, and am able to tell you that the Crown Prosecution Service is not aware of any police investigations being carried out in either of these areas," he wrote. "I understand that there was a substantial investigation by the Lancashire police into the activities of Mr Oyston, Mr Parker and Mr McGrath over four years ago but that no evidence of any criminal offence was revealed."

In spite of this assurance, on 7 August 1991 Lancashire police launched their ill-fated Operation Angel with 19 raids on the town hall, business offices and homes of the Labour leaders in Preston. A 20-man police team charged at least 21 people, including Preston's chief executive and its deputy leader, with corruption, conspiracy and theft.

But in the six years since these raids, the only people convicted of any offences have been four small businessmen and two minor council officials, all but one of whom had already been reported to the police before the operations began. All those charged under Operation Angel with deception, corruption and conspiracy to defraud — including former deputy leader Frank McGrath — have seen charges dropped by the CPS or have been found not guilty. Lord Justice Nolan also ruled that all the raids and searches on the council leaders were unlawful.

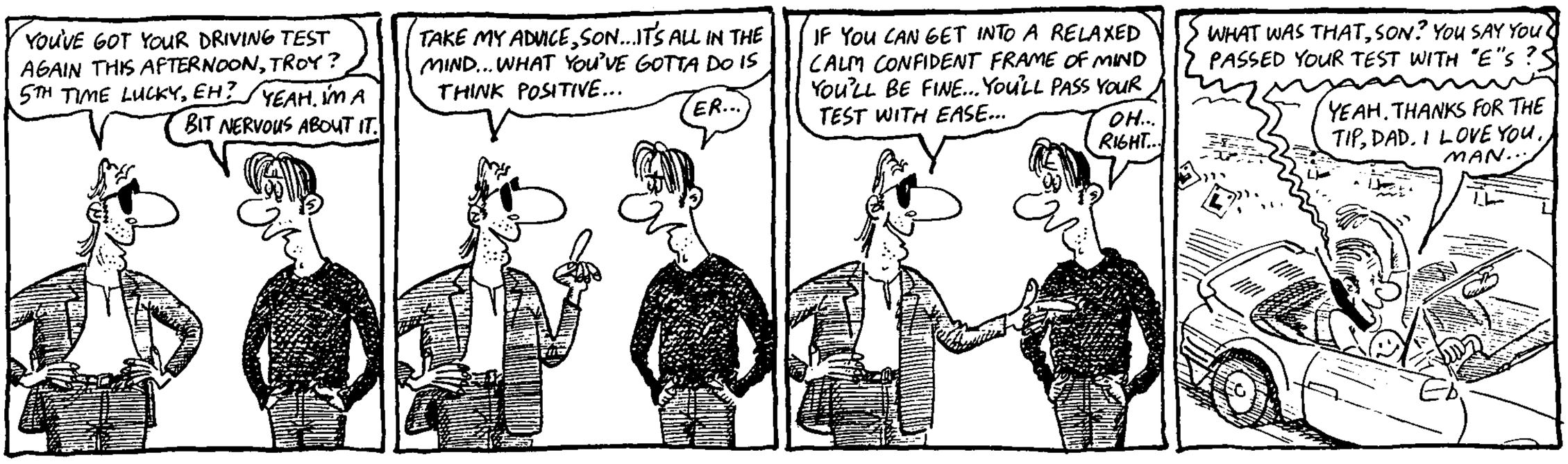
This was proclaimed as a stunning success for Operation Angel — even though the case had actually been reported to the police by the council well before the Angel investigation. Besides, the small sums involved in these frauds seem a pretty poor return for all the time and money invested by the police and the CPS. The total cost of the investigations is well over £10m, much of it paid out by a hard-pressed police force which has had to make many budget sacrifices in recent years.

As loyal Tories who believe in strict controls on public spending, do milord Blaker and Robert Atkins think this was money well spent?

"If Labour gets in, I'm leaving the country!"

Celeb

LIGGER


YOU'VE GOT YOUR DRIVING TEST AGAIN THIS AFTERNOON, TROY? 5TH TIME LUCKY, EH?
YEAH. I'M A BIT NERVOUS ABOUT IT.
TAKE MY ADVICE, SON... IT'S ALL IN THE MIND... WHAT YOU'VE GOTTA DO IS THINK POSITIVE...
ER...
IF YOU CAN GET INTO A RELAXED CALM CONFIDENT FRAME OF MIND YOU'LL BE FINE... YOU'LL PASS YOUR TEST WITH EASE...
OH... RIGHT...
WHAT WAS THAT, SON? YOU SAY YOU PASSED YOUR TEST WITH "E"s?
YEAH. THANKS FOR THE TIP, DAD. I LOVE YOU, MAN...

EYE TV

The Grand (ITV)

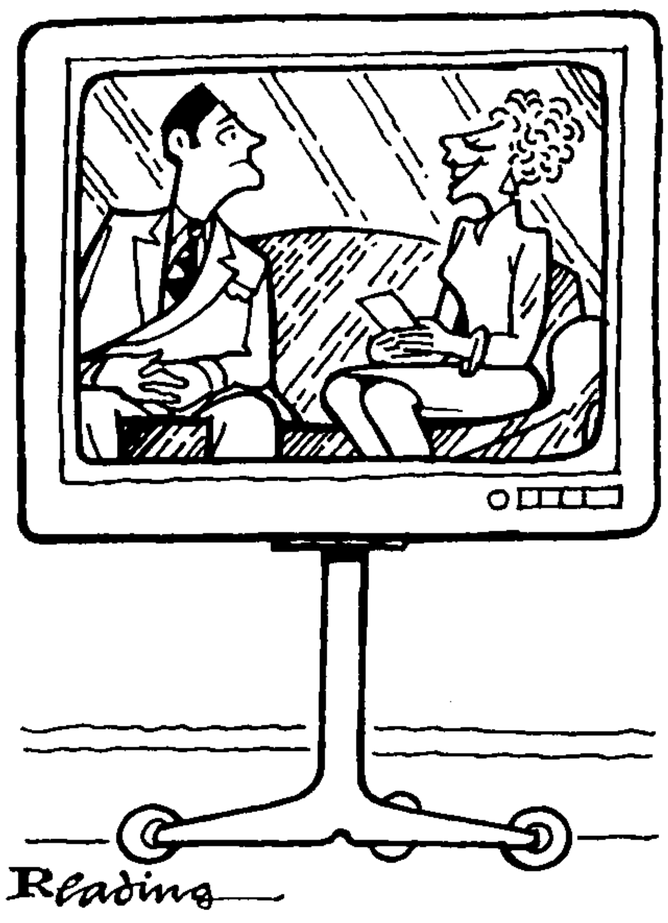
Where The Heart Is (ITV)

THE election campaign rolls on... and everyone turns over to see what's on the other side. A nation desperate for diversion must make the most of what it has, so it was no great surprise when ITV's two new drama series each picked up 10 million viewers with their first episodes last weekend. Whether they can retain such favour after the election, when audiences will no longer be running screaming from Peter Snow, is another matter entirely.

The Grand is perhaps ITV's most cogent response yet to the costume drama mania that has overwhelmed peaktime TV over the past couple of years. Not based on a classic novel, and therefore unlikely to deter the station's core audience of the elderly and institutionalised, this eight-parter has instead been shamelessly modelled on the one costume series that all ITV viewers remember with fondness: *Upstairs Downstairs*.

The Grand Hotel in Manchester may be more bustling than Eaton Place ever was, but many of the themes, characterisations and plotlines are more than a little familiar. The *Upstairs* types (good teeth, shiny hair, neat clothes) drink a lot of tea and conduct hotel business by staring at large piles of unpaid bills and looking worried. The *Downstairs* types (lawks a mercy, god bless you, guvnor) are the real heroes: brave, conscientious, fiercely loyal and far nicer than their employers. "Slice of Victoria sponge, Mr Hudson? Don't mind if I do, Mrs Bridges."

There is one important difference, though: *Upstairs Downstairs* was actually rather good. Watch the old tapes now (as LWT audiences were lucky enough to last year) and you would marvel at the show's believability and sometimes uncompromising realism. *The Grand* wouldn't know uncompromising realism if it bit it in the bottom. It's pure pap, made with British TV's customary attention to detail (anti-macassars, potted plants) but dramatically as shallow and facile as the feeblest soap.



"There's no need to be interesting — this is daytime TV"

So, having established the nice-but-dim Upstairs family, the show immediately adds Mark McGann as the villainous brother, twirling an invisible moustache and very possibly saying "Heh! Heh! Heh!" between takes. Born and raised in panto, this character is more familiar to us these days from the collected works of Aaron Spelling. Occasionally the old bag grandmother pops up and says things like "I do hope going abroad hasn't filled your head with fanciful notions", thus reminding everyone that Dot Cotton is soon to return to *EastEnders*. In one of the suites upstairs a gloomy man shoots himself, as someone always does in the first episode of a useless new series like this.

The Grand, however, is merely cynical, lazy, second-hand and irredeemably third-rate. **Where The Heart Is** genuinely seems like a threat to life. Ripped off every faintly rural, vaguely medical drama series ever conceived — around 5,000 of them in the past five years alone — it is comfortable to the point of anaesthesia.

Pam Ferris and Sarah Lancashire (Raquel from *Coronation Street*) play district nurses in a small Yorkshire town dealing with the sort of moral dilemmas seen last week in *Peak Practice* and a few weeks before in *Casualty*. The script is studiedly downbeat, to the extent that everyone always says exactly what you think they are going to say and you suspect that may be the idea.

What's so sad is that there is some good work here: the two leads have a natural warmth, and in just two episodes all the principal characters already live and breathe. But to what end? ITV's terror of new ideas is legendary, but the stultifying unoriginality of this project takes the breath away. As Sarah Lancashire's character tells her husband after the birth of their child: "Get down to t'pub, yer daft booger." Any viewer who heeded her advice would not have regretted it.

'Old Couch Potato'

MEDIA NEWS

SIGHS of relief echoed round the BBC's corridors of power when Martin Bell, independent anti-sleaze candidate for Tatton, resigned as a foreign correspondent.

Executives were embarrassed at the political stand taken by one of their employees and were scared that the government, despite John Birt's brown-nosing, would think the Beeb was overrun with pinkos.

At an editorial meeting at Broadcasting House, for example, Steve Mitchell, head of radio news, made the BBC's disdain over Bell's move all too clear. He told editors it was official policy that news about the Tatton constituency was now considered boring by the BBC and must be well down the running order.

Although the BBC cannot stop newspapers referring to Bell as a former BBC journalist, corporation hacks are under strict orders to refer to Bell simply as a former journalist.

MILLIONS of floating voters must have been deeply impressed by last week's "Millionaires for Labour" party election broadcast, in which tycoons such as Terence Conran, Anita Roddick and Granada supremo Gerry Robinson revealed their allegiance to socialism.

But Gerry Robinson's support for "new" Labour clearly has its limits. Granada's press office in Manchester is currently trying to recruit a new press assistant on a salary of £80 per week — somewhat below Labour's recommended minimum wage. Unsurprisingly, there has been no taker.

Robinson regularly boasts that he works only four days a week, and says nobody should have to work longer. Researchers, producers and other staff at Granada TV, meanwhile, put in six-day and seven-day weeks on the insistence of their Labour-supporting boss.

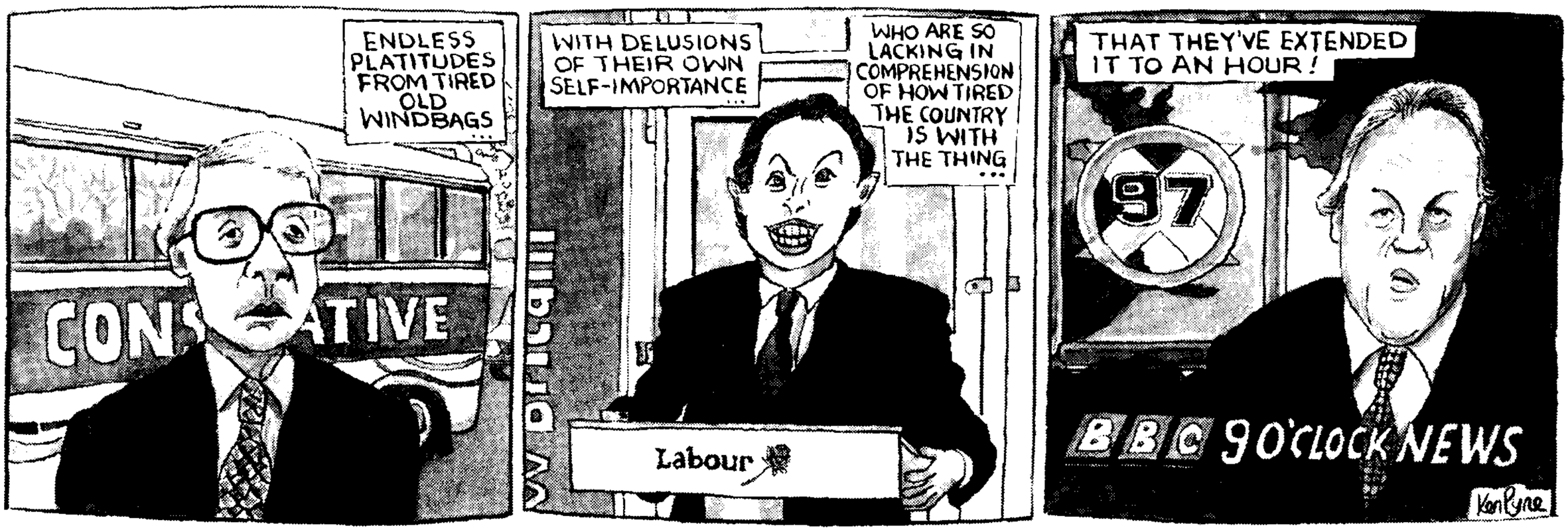
A suitable case, surely, for investigation by Granada's fearless *World In Action*?

"CHANNEL 5: how was it for you?" the *Guardian* asked various media types last week. Most — including Tony Parsons, TV executive Stephen Garrett and ad-man Trevor Beattie — singled out late-night presenter Jack Docherty as the channel's brightest star.

Janet Street-Porter begged to differ. "Jack Docherty looks nervous, format totally unoriginal," she grumbled.

Oddly enough, Street-Porter's paramour, Normski, also had his eye on the C5 late-night slot: he had submitted a programme-idea whereby he would interview celebrities while whizzing around on a skateboard. For some reason C5 bosses decided this exciting gimmick was a non-starter and awarded the contract to Jack Docherty instead.

Not that this has any connection with Janet's sour remarks about Docherty's "totally unoriginal" — and lamentably skateboard-free — chatshow.


ENDLESS PLATITUDES FROM TIRED OLD WINDBAGS ...
CONS ATIVE
WITH DELUSIONS OF THEIR OWN SELF-IMPORTANCE ...
WHO ARE SO LACKING IN COMPREHENSION OF HOW TIRED THE COUNTRY IS WITH THE THING ...
Labour
THAT THEY'VE EXTENDED IT TO AN HOUR!
97
BBC 9O'CLOCK NEWS
Ken Pyne

CHANNEL 5 controllers, faced with the problem of filling hours of daytime TV, fell back on the trusty old phone-in.

A live phone-in was to have formed a large chunk of the Meridian Television-made programme *Espresso*, an hour of consumer issues and chat with experts on hand to answer viewers' questions.

Just one hitch. The fussy Channel 5 lawyer was so paranoid about letting viewers speak their minds on air that the phone-in had to be pre-recorded. But viewers would not have known to telephone the programme with questions before the "live" phone-in was on air — hence friends of the production staff have been chivvied into calling up with "queries" to be answered by the studio experts.

Thus Channel 5's live public phone-in is neither live, nor does it involve the general public.

"The colours of the political parties are: blue, red, yellow, green and whiter than white"

BIRTSPEAK

JOHN BARLOW has been appointed as SET project director for BBC Resources.

In 1996 SET, the Systems Examination Team, looked at "best practice" techniques for business processes and systems across the Directorate. Now John is on board, initially for a period of 12 months, he will lead a small team ensuring that best practice is implemented in every Resources unit. The SET initiative will build, as before, on input from all business units within Resources. "Our key priority is to become more efficient, while maintaining quality," says John. "It's vital that our systems enhance the business and ensure we can concentrate on serving our customers. With the introduction of such systems throughout the BBC, via the MEDAS project, we are well positioned to influence the final outcome."

— Around Resources

VIDEO NASTIES

MORE suggestions arrive on what to do with unwanted Referendum party videos.

Reader Greg Russell emails from cyberspace urging voters to send theirs to TV's Jeremy Beadle, taking advantage of the latter's Freepost facility. "They could solve two problems at a stroke — getting rid of the video (obviously) and turning the tables on the despised Beadle."

Meanwhile Keith J. Flett from Portsmouth wants recipients to mark their tapes "return to sender". "If all 3.5 million of them were to do this, party workers could do something useful like stacking them into a pile 57.6 miles high or spreading them over an area of 17.25 acres."

But there is deep gloom in Putney, the constituency where Sir James Goldsmith has sited his bunker. Instead of the standard 12-minute video nasty, voters have received a 25-minute affair. As voter Richard Hilton writes, this is useless "as we need at least another five minutes to tape any decent programme over it".

Good news from Horsham, however, where the video is seen as the perfect metaphor for the Referendum party itself: one reader's 12-minute tape was... completely blank.

JUST FANCY THAT!

MORE evidence of anti-Tory bias emerged at the BBC, whose election site on the world wide web gives the following address for the Conservatives' manifesto: "conman.html".

FOURPLAY SPECIAL

ON 28 April Channel 4 will at last appoint Michael Grade's successor as chief executive — if its directors can agree on a suitable candidate.

Alan Yentob, once hotly tipped, is now a rank outsider as C4 has belatedly discovered what has long been apparent to the BBC — that he is an amiable ditherer, incapable of taking a decision. This leaves three main contenders: John Willis, C4's director of programmes; Michael Jackson, the boss of BBC1; and Greg Dyke, currently in charge of the Pearson corporation's TV interests.

Dyke is the least likely of the three — partly because it would look very odd if radical, daring Channel 4 recruited the man who gave us Roland Rat, and partly because he is thought to be interested in privatising Channel 4.

Jackson, having been associated with the Channel in its infancy, seems rather more plausible. In the early 1980s, fresh out of Central London Poly, he lobbied the first chief executive Jeremy Isaacs not to stray from his remit to produce "alternative" programming. Isaacs eventually took the hint and commissioned Wacko Jacko to make a documentary series, since when the *Wunderkind* has never looked back. True, he loathes Tony Blair — but this may not necessarily be a handicap, since C4's chairman Sir Michael Bishop is a lifelong Tory.

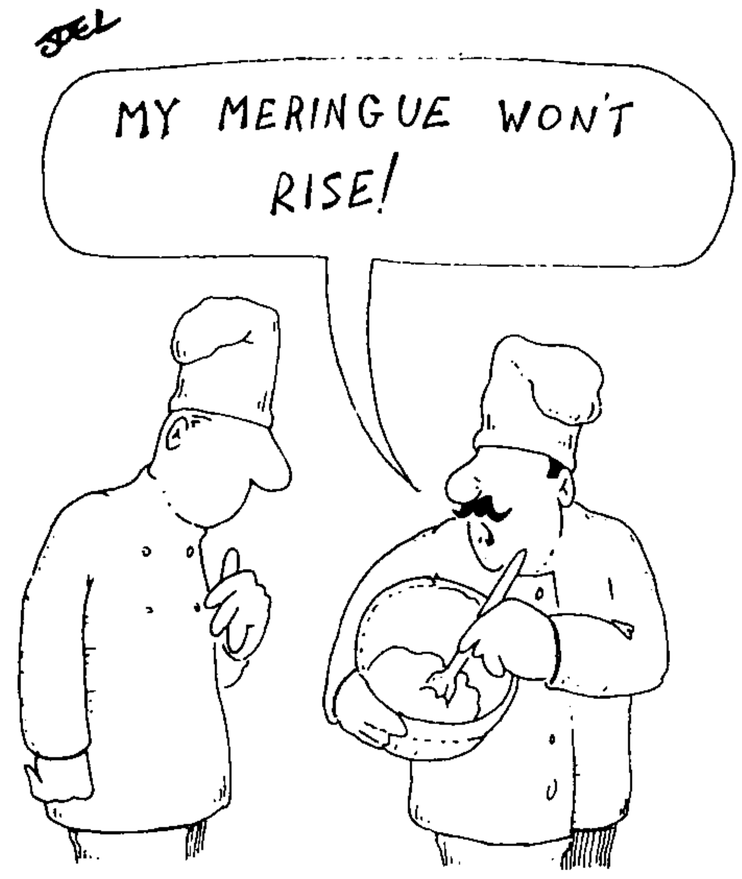
The choice of John Willis would be a vote of confidence in the way C4 has been run recently. As the Channel's board is dominated by its executive directors — David Scott, managing director; Colin Leventhal, director of acquisitions; Frank McGuigan, general manager; and Stewart Butterfield, director of advertising — they may well be tempted, if only to save their own jobs. An outsider, by contrast, might well wonder whether Leventhal, who blew £100m of the Channel's budget on *ER* and *Friends*, wouldn't be more usefully employed at a more mainstream station.

And that's the problem. Channel 4 was created to do things that other networks wouldn't consider. In the past few years, however, its schedules have been increasingly dominated by classy American imports — which might just as well be on the BBC or Sky One — and sensation-seeking tosh such as *The Girlie Show*. The "minority" programmes which were the channel's trademark have all but disappeared in the quest for ratings and advertising revenue. The latest victim is *African Express*, cancelled recently when marketing wallahs decided it had too many viewers from social groups C2 and D. Since the show was aimed at Afro-Caribbeans, who are not exactly the most affluent section of the community, this was scarcely surprising. But now that Channel 4 is driven by commercial imperatives, *African Express* had to go.

This policy has done wonders for C4's bank balance but it has gravely weakened the case against privatisation. Michael Grade's noisy campaign against the "funding formula" whereby C4 has to hand over half its surplus to ITV merely alerted many MPs to the fact that it is now a hugely profitable public asset: last year, for example, the Channel paid £76m to the ITV companies but kept another £76m for itself. If C4 is now financially solvent — and its output is indistinguishable from that of other channels — why not sell it off?

Officially, Labour is still opposed to privatising Channel 4. But everyone knows that a Blair government will have to raise extra cash somehow in the next year or two — which is why sources close to Gordon Brown, in unattributable briefings during the last month, have been insisting that "we are not ruling it out". This would be good news for the big ITV companies who are longing for a slice of the action. And, as luck would have it, many of these firms are now run by Friends of Tony — such as Lord Hollick of Anglia, Gerry Robinson of Granada/LWT and Gus McDonald of Scottish TV.

Both Michael Jackson and John Willis would no doubt do their best to resist this. But how much support can the new chief executive expect from his directors once the well-known consequences of privatisation — vast boardroom pay-rises, share options, trebles all round — are dangled enticingly before them? The irony is that Michael Grade resigned from C4 because he wanted to earn some serious money. Yet the changes he introduced, with their stress on "maximising revenue" and "making the station more appealing to advertisers", may well enable his old colleagues to hit the jackpot.



Albumen Behaving Badly

I-BSkyB

THERE'LL be a new guest in your house from tomorrow.

At 6pm, Channel Five is launched.

It may be a small step for those with dozens of satellite channels, but it's a giant leap for those sad folks who are stuck with just four to choose from.

Sun Leader

An occasional column for which readers are invited to submit Sky-plugs masquerading as news items in Murdoch papers. The usual £10 will be paid.

Yobs
HUSBAND
Well chuck have you chosen
Yes Cilla number one
Oi you, number one change places. now!
Well lets see the luverly boys you turned down....
BLIND DATE

DOING THE ROUNDS

HEALTH secretary Stephen Dorrell has ordered an inquiry into cardiac surgery at Bristol Royal Infirmary — just five years after the *Eye* exposed the alarmingly high mortality rates for children undergoing certain heart operations.

An external audit into the problem, which was not completed until January 1996, confirmed our story and the surgeons involved, James Wisheart and Dhasmana Janardan, were taken off paediatric duty. A subsequent audit has found that Mr Wisheart's performance in adult cardiac surgery was also considerably worse than his colleagues' and he has now announced his intention to retire.

● THE government's 1991 New Deal for Junior Doctors was as much to do with improving the working environment as reducing hours. Minimum standards were set for the food and accommodation to be provided for junior doctors who were on call or resident in the hospital.

Six years later, 120 trusts have been surveyed by telephone to find out how many are delivering these minimum standards. Alas, not one. Less than half provide a comfortable bed; 60 percent provide inadequate heating; less than a quarter provide proper sound proofing; less than half have decent kitchen facilities; and security and hot food provision is universally poor.

Very few trusts provide a hot meal for doctors after 7pm, and on Christmas Day only 20 percent of doctors had access to anything approaching warm food. As junior doctor committee chairman Peter Bennie put it: "Reductions in hours are meaningless if doctors go back to cold food and dismal rooms."

● ON 1 MAY **Liverpool's Alder Hey Children's Hospital** is to close ward B3, a specialist unit for patients with cystic fibrosis and diabetes, and disband its team of 28 nurses. The move has not proved popular with parents, who barricaded the managers' car park in protest. Others are refusing to give drugs to their children at home in an attempt to force the ward to stay open.

● **CALDERDALE NHS Healthcare Trust's** much-loved chief executive Haydn Cook (*Eyes passim*) has followed up surgical bed closures with a plan to reduce beds for the mentally ill from 209 to 48 when Calderdale's long awaited "hospital for the millennium" opens in 2000.

● **EAST London and City Health Authority** has proposed the closure of three hospitals — **St Andrew's, St Clement's** and the **Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children** — in a bid to claw back it's £4.4m debt. Last November it axed £14m from contracts with local trust hospitals. Meanwhile in **Wales** the **Dyfed Powys Health Authority** is £11m down the pan, and chair Vanessa Bourne has proposed the closure of eight (out of 19) community hospitals, with services changed in a further six and beds cut in four district general hospitals.

● GPs and consultants have never quite agreed on the division of labour, but the competitiveness of the internal market has forced GPs to get militant about prescribing and monitoring treatment initiated in hospital. Now, it isn't just the extra work but who picks up the tab that matters.

In **Sheffield**, GPs have refused to monitor patients on anti-coagulants or prescribe and monitor expensive drugs for cancer and Parkinson's disease without receiving extra resources. In **Middlesbrough**, it's no to the prescription and monitoring of second-line rheumatology drugs; in **Peterborough**, thumbs down to anti-coagulation and the care of patients prematurely discharged from hospital; and in **Camden and Islington**, monitoring anti-coagulation and suture removal are out. Camden and **Cornwall** GPs are also refusing to prescribe and monitor the expensive kidney failure drug erythropoetin. All this is entirely understandable, given the working conditions of GPs, but it rebounds on those who are even more overburdened: patients who have to trek to hospital to see knackered junior doctors.

● A COMMONS inquiry commissioned by the **NHS Executive** (NHSE) into the former **Yorkshire Health Authority** has accused RHA chair Sir Brian Askew, a three-time Tory candidate, of "failing to monitor adequately the actions of senior managers". The inquiry duplicated many of the findings of the NHSE, notably that regional general manager Keith McLean "failed to discharge his duty of care". New findings include "excessive and unseemly spending on hospitality by officials of the former RHA" — £695,000 went on hotels and restaurants in two years — and the sale of the **Scotton Banks** hospital site was handled "without authority and competence". The "catalogue of breeches of process, control and regulation" between 1991 and 1994 left a £3m debt.

● HEALTH is firmly on the agenda for election 97. **South Tees BMA** invited 12 local politicians to state their case. All four Labour candidates failed to appear and the only Tory, Tim Devlin, was an hour late. But he wasted no time in joining two Liberal Democrats to slag off Labour. Great debate.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

THERE was some hope that Professor Hugh Pennington might have calmed down the hysteria on *E coli* in the wake of the Lanarkshire outbreak. He was, after all, the only establishment scientist who supported cheesemaker Humphrey Errington against the Lanark food gestapo in the infamous Lanark Blue trial (*Eyes passim*).

But it was not to be. His report, published last week, included virtually every recommendation that could possibly be thought of — and some more besides. It represented a field day for officials and a total nightmare for anyone farming cattle, slaughtering, butchering or manufacturing meat products.

Surprisingly, however, Pennington does *not* deal with the role of officials in the outbreak even though — as is strongly rumoured — health officials did inspect the butcher's shop which caused the fatal outbreak two weeks before the epidemic. Instead, Pennington recommends "more resources" for "enforcement": ie give the wretched officials even more money.

If a butcher gets it wrong, his customers become ill and may desert him. He is closed down, possibly prosecuted, fined and even imprisoned. But if officials get it wrong, what happens? They get the Penningtons of this world to say that they need more money.

Worst of all, the report is being hailed by politicians and consumer representatives as some kind of massive leap forward in consumer protection. Yet each time there is a major food-poisoning outbreak, the same things happen: a hue and cry followed by an independent report, massive new laws, even more officials and more and more inspections. Then, each time, there are... yet more outbreaks and more outbreaks. The Pennington report will change nothing.

A BITTER row is rumbling away on the use of genetically engineered Bovine Somotrophin (BST), the milk yield booster being stockpiled in huge quantities by Eli Lilly in Merseyside.

This is in anticipation of the European Union ban on its use ending in December 1999. And anti-BST campaigners, anxious to ensure the product is not being sneaked in by the back door, have asked outgoing agriculture minister Douglas "Piggy" Hogg if BST is in use anywhere in the UK under "experimental" licence.

Piggy has responded with the reassuring claim that BST cannot be used without a special licence and that "no application" has been received for such a licence. However, the agriculture spokesman in the Lords, Jamie Lindsay, paints a different picture. Within days of Piggy's claim, he wrote that BST *is* being used, at the Hannah Institute in Ayre, under, er... an experimental licence. *Surely* Piggy cannot be telling porkies?

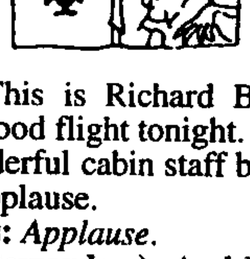
'New Muckspreader'

Old Macdonald

ALBERT

IT'S NOT THAT HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS IS GETTING PARANOID! IT'S JUST THAT HE'S SICK AN' TIRED OF HIS OFF THE RECORD COMMENTS APPEARING IN THE PRESS!
SO, IF YOU WANT HIM TO TALK TO YOU I'M AFRAID, FROM NOW ON, YOU'LL HAVE TO DO IT THROUGH ME!
IS THAT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR!
DUCHY OF CORNWALL
NIBBINS NIBBINS & NIBBINS SOLICITORS

O·B·N



Tannoy: This is Richard Branson. I hope you've had a good flight tonight. I'd like us all to thank the wonderful cabin staff by giving them a big round of applause.

Passengers: *Applause.*

Tannoy (Stewardess): And I'd like to thank Richard for being such a wonderful boss. Big round of applause for Richard!

Passengers: ????

Virgin Atlantic Flight, 5/3/97

CONTRIBUTOR: Robert Bathurst.

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

THE Rotten Borough Advertiser

Friday, 18th April 1997

ELECTION '97

ROTTEN BOROUGHS are a-tremble as a raft of ambitious councillors and ex-councillors present themselves at the general election.

For some hard-pressed town halls this may be the only chance to get shot of someone really dreadful. So as a service to voters — and to those straight, selfless types who remain committed to grassroots activism over dog mess and street lights — the *Eye* offers this round-up of candidates whose inept policy-making, incompetence and in some cases downright corruption deserve a place on the national stage in the Mother of Parliaments...

BEDFORD

TORY candidate **Bob Blackman** has impeccable political credentials: for much of the 90s he was leader of **Bent council**, Britain's barmiest borough.

Blackman seized power after two Labourites — Nkechi Amalu-Johnson and Poline Nyaga — defected, called themselves Democratic Labour and, bizarrely, threw their weight behind the Tories. To keep the mad twosome's support, Blackman had tacitly to support all their daft proclamations: Amalu's unstinting praise for Idi Amin; her calls for the legalisation of female circumcision, for the mass sacking of the council's Asian staff and their replacement with Africans, and for her wish that slummy Harlesden be renamed Harlesden-on-Nirvana.

His most embarrassing moment came when Bent Labour group was given a new office computer, straight from Blackman's office. He forgot to erase his most sensitive files — including those thanking the government for "rigging" the local government grant system to help keep Bent Tories in control.

Blackman scrapped traditional council departments and turned the town hall into 150 self-supporting business units. This fell apart when the Ad Shop "unit" went bust owing £400,000. The building maintenance unit did badly, too. It went bust for £500,000, weeks after paying its manager a £4,000 performance bonus.

There was also sleaze. Blackman personally okayed a £70,000 grant to the Irish Centre for "renovating the bar" (most of it went on Guinness-drinking training sessions) only days before the 1994 council elections. The Tories won by one seat: Cricklewood, home of the Irish Centre.

BENT EAST

MARK FRANÇOIS, who is facing Ken Livingstone for the Tories, is best known as the councillor behind the Conservatives' remarkable clean sweep of all 15 seats on **Basildon council** in 1992.

Less well known is that François works as a "consultant", advising arms manufacturers how to win government contracts. This was not well known when he stood up at the 1992 Tory party conference and made an impassioned speech against defence cuts (but not necessarily for his clients, of course) before an enraptured Michael Portillo.

ENFIELD SOUTHGATE

IT IS not just Tories who enjoy lucrative lobbying: there is also the president of the Fabian Society, **Islington** councillor **Stephen Twigg**.

Twigg is standing for Labour against defence secretary Michael Portillo. Although the latter has a 16,000 majority, some predict a 20 percent swing to Labour in London which would allow Twigg to squeeze in.

Before he was crowned president of the Fabians, Twigg had been working hard for lobbying firm Rowland Sallisbury Casey. This allowed him to exchange views with the company's chairman, John Maples (the Tory candidate for Stratford-upon-Avon). Twigg also orchestrated the infamous campaign against Liz Davies's selection in Leeds north east and made himself even more unpopular when he stood for the leadership of Islington council, initiating a bitter campaign.

JARROW

HOTHEADED **Stephen Hepburn**'s election in this safe Labour seat seems certain — despite his unsavoury past on **South Tyneside council**.

While Hepburn was deputy leader, the Labour group was split by in-fighting into two meaningless factions, the A-team and the B-team. Two years ago Hepburn's temper overcame him after a petty row in the chamber. He grabbed Coun Iain Malcolm in a headlock, hit him over the head and shouted: "I'm going to fucking kill you." He was convicted of assault.

LEEDS N.E.

IF **LEEDS city council** education chair **Fabian Hamilton** unseats home office minister Timothy Kirkhope, it will be a remarkable comeback for the man who was ruled out of the contest when Labour decided on a women-only shortlist for this marginal.

The contest was famously reopened after Tony Blair blocked the choice of Liz Davies (a socialist) and Hamilton survived allegations of a questionable business record to become the "new" Labour candidate.

Despite having done the leadership's bidding, however, Leeds North East Labour party has since been suspended by the NEC. If Hamilton is elected on 1 May he still faces a court case over alleged multiple breaches of the companies act. The private prosecution has been brought by his good friends in the... now disbanded Labour party in Leeds North East!

LEICESTER EAST

SIMON MILTON's election leaflets — promoting him for the Tories against Labour's Keith Vaz — don't fully flesh out his past.

They say nothing about his role, as a councillor in **Westminster**, in placing homeless families into Hermes and Chantry Points, two asbestos-ridden tower blocks in the London borough, as a way of clearing Labour voting types from marginal wards elsewhere.

Nor does the CV mention, alongside his roles as director of the Bakery and Restaurant Company, Milton's time as a bag man for Ian Greer Associates. Never mind, he can always fill the leaflets with photos of himself standing next to Mickey Mouse and Goofy in Disneyland which he visits several times a year with his friend and fellow Westminster councillor, Robert Davis.

LIVERPOOL RIVERSIDE

LABOUR's **Louise Ellman** has an engaging history as a **Lancashire county councillor**. As leader she clocked up an impressive sideline in directorships: 23 in all.

Ellman is also vice chair of Lancashire Enterprises plc, the county's development agency which was privatised (very Blairite) in 1989. Media millionaire Owen Oyston held 2.5 million shares in the company. Despite her election on an all-wimmin shortlist, with wimmin's rights prominent on her agenda, she still burst into tears in court when the jury found Oyston guilty of raping a 16-year-old.

MAIDENHEAD

THERE's one deeply humiliating incident from Labour candidate **Denise Robson**'s past she is unlikely to want voters to know: not that she used to be a Labour councillor in **Hackney**, though that's bad enough; but that she once employed Mark Trotter, Hackney's king of the paedophiles, as a babysitter.

Trotter was the Hackney social worker who died of AIDS before charges of buggering kids in his care could be brought against him. Hackney council had been warned of Trotter's habits soon after employing him in the early 80s — but Labour councillors turned a blind eye because he was a "good party comrade".

MANCHESTER BLACKLEY

LABOUR candidate **Graham Stringer**'s pisspoor record with **Manchester city council** is unrivalled. He became leader in 1984 after a left-wing coup which promised the usual "fight" against "Tory cuts" to bring down the Thatch government. But his lot carried out its own assault claiming "our cuts are less damaging than the Tories'."

When Labour failed to win the 1987 general election and so bail out Labour councils across the UK, Stringer *changed* tack. There was no longer any point in aiming for a socialist Manchester. Instead there would be a sporty Manchester of "world-class facilities" and endless Olympic games. So far the "world-class facilities" amount to a rarely-used velodrome with a leaky roof and a non-existent national stadium. As for the games, the result was humiliation twice at the hands of the International Olympics Committee.

Stringer cocked up two other would-be prestigious events. The world chess championship moved to London after Manchester annoyed both Nigel Short and Gary Kasparov. Then there was Global Forum, supposedly a follow-up to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit which would be attended by 50,000 visitors and world leaders. It was called off when £1m-plus sponsorship fell short by about, er, £1m.

MILTON KEYNES S.W.

WILL **Barry Legg**, the Tory (and former **Westminster city councillor**) seeking reelection, remind voters what's happened to him over the last five years? Will his leaflets mention that in 1994 he was found guilty by Westminster council's district auditor in his provisional report on the Tory council's homes-for-votes scandal of wilful misconduct?

Although the auditor said Legg could expect to pay back his share of £21m swindled from the public purse through gerrymandering, this was changed when it turned out that the then councillor had missed a few key meetings.

Maybe Legg will reveal that he was a member of a secret council meeting which decided to move homeless families into two notorious tower blocks known to be riddled with asbestos. Or he may not. He could also explain his role as secretary of Hillsdown Holdings, which the high court found had unlawfully removed £18m from its pension fund to prop up its failing assets. All in all, the Legg election address should make interesting reading.

"How many microphones do you think you have in front of you?"

NOOKS and CORNERS

FORT William, sited in spectacular country between Loch Linnhe and Ben Nevis, ought to be one of the most picturesque places in Britain. In fact it is a complete dump, dominated by the aluminium smelting works, cut up by both roads and railway, and with what little charm there is destroyed by the cheap cowboy architecture of recent decades.

Given this, it might be supposed that the authorities would want to look after what few precious old buildings of character survive. But no. Fort William is administered by the Highland council, a local authority notorious for its enthusiasm for granting planning permission for the most damaging development proposals and listed building consent for the destruction or mutilation of historic buildings.

A sad case in point is the Old School in Achintore Road. Formerly a senior secondary school and later a primary school, this Late Victorian pile with its own schoolmaster's house is now redundant. But it is a listed building, a prominent and cherished local landmark and, being substantial and generally sound, could easily be converted into flats. But as far as Mr Arthur McCourt, chief executive of Highland council is concerned, it is merely a development site — right by the loch. So the school must go.

Mr McCourt is helped by the fact that the south-west gable at one end of the old school is a little dodgy. So a "report" has been commissioned from Messrs Cruden, a firm of builders not known for their expertise in dealing with historic structures, and — surprise, surprise — it finds that the building is so dangerous Crudens' brave men dare not go near it to shore it up. It is also a danger to children at the nearby new primary school.

Never mind that a structural engineer commissioned by Historic Scotland came to different conclusions — his report has not been released. And, oddly enough, the adjacent 19th century manse which commands access to the site has just been sold by the council to a developer. So the chief executive now has a duty to issue a demolition warrant. And, as we all know, once the bulldozers make the south-west gable safe, it is difficult to know when to stop...

Some councillors are not altogether happy, but Mr McCourt regards the matter as one of confidence in himself. So everyone has fallen into line, including the docile chief of planning.

ANOTHER listed building in danger of demolition is poor old Battersea power station.

In Eye 919 I discussed the Cringle Street pumping station which Parkview International, the Hong Kong company which wants to create a "leisure centre" on the Battersea site, seems to find surplus to requirements. Now, after more than a decade of neglect following partial demolition by Mrs Thatcher's servant John Broome, the future of the power station itself looks increasingly uncertain.

Parkview International is, of course, totally committed to restoring and converting the listed structure. But it is a pity the company has not yet got around to looking after the forlorn shell of the building. A report by English Heritage has found that "the general envelope of the building is suffering from prolonged and continual deterioration and erosion as a result of its exposed condition and continual neglect in carrying out holding maintenance works... There is further loss and damage of the protective sheathing and fly battening to the inner wall surfaces of the main body of the building which are exposed to the elements following the earlier loss of the main roof".

The most interesting part of the surviving interior, the former control room, "has a number of leaks through the roof at the S end and water penetration through the N end wall with possible adverse effects to the marble claddings if allowed to continue". The turbine hall is also suffering.

The report concludes with a list of maintenance works — including removal of vegetation growing on the stepped bases of the chimneys — which no doubt Parkview International is keen to carry out. After all, it wouldn't prefer to develop a cleared site, would it?

'Piloti'

MILLENNIUM NEWS

THE ferris wheel, to be built on the Thames at a cost of £9.5m to celebrate the year 2000 and taking 50 per cent of its energy from solar and tidal power, is a flop before it has started.

Its backers admit there is no chance of getting that amount of energy from natural, renewable sources: it was simply an idea that helped gain support and planning permission.

From the start the Millennium Wheel Company has said, without qualification: "More than half the energy required to turn it will come from the Thames. The river's tidal power will be harnessed via mini-turbines in the river." This surprised tidal experts. The company now admits it will not happen. "We have run into problems with both the Port of London Authority and tidal power," said architect Malcolm Cook at the wheel's office.

"To really gain all the energy from the water, we would have to place turbines 14 metres (42 feet) in diameter in the main shipping lane. You would need more than one. If the criteria was to maximise the energy, 14 metres might be the diameter to go for but the criteria is to get the PLA to agree. We would put them in the middle of the shipping channel, which is the deepest part and has the strongest currents. There is no willingness on the PLA's part to promote such a project. A boat can lose its rudder and just plough into something at horrendous speed." Too true.

As to solar energy, he said: "We haven't got permission hurdles to get through. We are looking at providing 8-10 metre square solar panels to help make the capsules energy-sufficient but again that will not be enough energy to assist us during the winter months when we want to run the wheel at night. And in a way, the wheel overshadows itself. It faces north-south so half the time the capsules will be in shade. The sun is not always vertically above." Again, too true.

Pseuds Corner

Zebra

You hesitate, my little adventurer. Are you heading for the West or the East? From one moment to the next your ringed legs threaten to whisk you away at a gallop with the wind combing your mane. Who are you, indeed? A runaway slave or a horse pursuing a tiger's dreams in borrowed robes? Who cares! At full speed you gain the open spaces, bearing your mystery towards unbridled horizons.

The Hermès Tie Catalogue
Spring/Summer 1997

Flagstones

Paving slabs along a royal path — you are scarcely trodden down by the hero as he marches towards his triumph, drunk with glory. No, gliding now with light foot, his ears deafened by the tapping of the woodpecker, who warns of the next shower, he receives the heated applause of an assembly, united in the heart of the forest and waiting, beside a great and brilliant fire, to commune with him in the love of elegance.

The Hermès Tie Catalogue
Spring/Summer 1997

French multi-media/performance artist Orlan makes "art" using the scalpels of plastic surgery as her tools and her face and body as the canvas. Each spectacle of skin slicing, telecast via satellite live around the world, is a medley or surgery, technology, music, theatre and dance, choreographed and directed by the artist, who while receiving only local anaesthetic reads aloud from psychoanalytic and literary texts.

Such work is not intended to be disturbing. Rather, Orlan views the body as obsolete — "more like a badly adapted machine" — and thus challenges issues of identity and notions of beauty: her last operation involved the implantation of horns.

Blueprint

I get very emotional when I talk about my son. This young man will transcend this game and bring to the world a humanitarianism which has never been known before. The world will be a better place to live in by virtue of his existence and his presence.

EARL WOODS
(father of golfer 'Tiger')
Daily Mirror

The light bulb is also, of itself, a highly charged ideological object, an emblem of normality, of a society that stigmatises its exceptional citizens, reviling their lack of conformity and mechanical ineptitude as unpardonable evidence of their elitism. The ability to perform this simple household chore becomes a test of one's humanity.

DANIEL MILLER
The Observer

Election Commentary/Interviewee/Panellist

The Gallup Organization is able to offer its spokesperson Dr Andy Brown as an interviewee to provide election comment and the latest election polling results.

Dr Andy Brown's academic background, his 10 years in the field of political opinion polling, his lobbying background and his in-depth knowledge of polling methodology make him an exceptionally able and credible commentator on the election campaign.

His youth (he is 29), his refreshing, lively personality, down-to-earth approach and animated style make him extremely media friendly and an ideal interviewee. A brief biography of Dr Andy Brown is attached.

Gallup Media Contact Information

CONTRIBUTORS: John Morris, Adrian Orchard, B.K. Otto, S. Mannorak, Peter Barnes, L. Selley.

£10 paid for entries

Letters

Day in day out

Sir,

Sometimes I worry about the EYE. *You note that there are only two further instalments of John Major's Secret Diary to come. Surely not? Since Tony Blair has resolved to change nothing of any importance that Major has done I fully expect him to continue writing the Secret Diary indefinitely.*

Yours,
KEITH FLETT,
Election Agent, David Spart, Beard Liberation Front candidate for Sedgefield.

Off the recorder

Sir,

I am somewhat surprised to note that the hatred of Sir James Goldsmith which you have nursed since the "Goldenballs" case that you lost, causes you to sneer at every opportunity at Goldsmith's efforts, at his own expense, to keep us from the folly of losing our national identity and becoming a province of an immensely corrupt federal Europe.

Your applauding of the mindless burks who write to you about how they dispose of the Referendum videos down lavatories and in skips is hardly worthy of you and I sincerely hope that sensible recipients review the videos and use their own judgement. If we do end up irrevocably in the grip of Brussels and the greasy slobs running that outfit (including Brittan and Kinnock) — the curse of Gnome upon yourselves.

Notwithstanding, I remain an avid reader.

LES KENT,
Stamford, Lincs.

Organism grinder

Sir,

In Waterworld you say Ian Byatt "claimed traces of pesticide in our water were 'like an aspirin in an Olympic swimming pool'. He should tell that to the tens of thousands of people in Hertfordshire who are being forced to boil their water and the 160 (so far) diarrhoea victims."

Er... what are you trying to say? The ill effects in Hertfordshire are caused by cryptosporidium, which is an organism. So why should the poor sufferers want a lecture on pesticides? Is it beyond you to get the simplest science right?

NORMAN WELLS,
Saffron Walden, Essex.

Lookalike

Elton

Wallace

Sir,

Pawing over the EVENING POST *recently whose face should I see grinning out at me but that of my loving master Wallace sporting a ridiculous wig! What a relief when I later realised it was only Elton John — certainly a close shave there!*

GROMIT,
Heaton Mersey, Stockport.

Test match

Sir,

New Muckspreader's last article suggested that experiments to test Mark Purdey's theory that organophosphates (OP) might modify BSE prion protein were badly designed. Mention was also made of money paid to the MRC Toxicology Unit by Zeneca plc. Some readers may have been misled by your wording and so have linked these two issues.

Mr Purdey is probably aware that his original theor, is wrong and has now proposed that the OP, phosmet, is unique. This new hypothesis is extremely implausible but Mr Purdey is of course entitled to expound yet another hypothesis.

As far as I am aware, Mr Purdey never accused the MRC of partiality and the funding of Zeneca plc to the Toxicology Unit was completely unrelated to the work carried out on his hypothesis. The Toxicology Unit's research and scientific conclusions are consistently impartial and we would not risk our enviable reputation for financial support from any commercial organisation.

Yours sincerely,

L.L. SMITH,
Professor and Director, MRC Toxicology Unit, Leicester.

Anagram

Sir,

So Ms Cox earned £50,000 from the SUN *for her al fresco photo-session with a Conservative MP. Coincidentally an anagram of Piers Merchant is: "Enriches Tramp!"*

Yours faithfully,
ROLAND SOULS,
Northolt, Middlesex.

An eye for an eye

Sir,

As someone who has worn a prosthetic eye for many years, I might be able to offer an alternative reason for the SUN*'s reluctance to use its photograph of David Wooding's "glass eye".*

The reason, I would think, was that the false eye proved not to be the "glassy orb" they were hoping for. My own prosthetic eye is, I believe, the same as most other monocular people use. It is in point of fact, a plastic, not glass, shell, not orb, and is not at all easy to use as an offensive weapon. Indeed, on the odd occasion I have dropped mine, it has bounced, not broken, and could hardly be wielded as a weapon even when whole.

If the authorities have banned Peter Sutcliffe from having a decent replacement on these grounds, I can only conclude that they are as divorced from reality as their charges. On the other hand, since most people who have seen mine have expressed surprise at its appearance, this myth of the "glass eye" seems to be so endemic in this country's population, that perhaps the authorities in this case are just displaying ordinary prejudice of the most blinkered, not to say half-blind, kind.

Yours,
KEVIN DOBSON,
London NW3.

Man of steel

Sir,

*In your Footnotes (*EYE *921) you have associated me with Crownridge Steel which has obtained outline planning permission to set up a steel strip rolling mill at Milford Haven.*

Although I am a director and shareholder of Crownridge Industries, which has never traded, I am neither a director nor shareholder of Crownridge Steel.

Lord St Davids is not a Conservative whip in the House of Lords.

Please get your facts right.

Yours faithfully,
THE RT HON SIR ARCHIE HAMILTON MP,
House of Commons.

● *Paul Foot writes: Fact 1. We described Crownridge Steel as an "associated company" of Crownridge Industries, of which Sir Archie is a director and shareholder. Crownridge Steel was incorporated on 25 February. The firm's registered office is the same as that of Crownridge Industries, 59-61 Onslow Gardens, London SW7. This is the same address as that of another director of Crownridge Industries, Edward James.*

Fact 2. Lord St Davids was a Tory whip in the House of Lords from 1992 till 1994 and is now deputy speaker there.

Public domains

Sir,

Piloti (fresh from his triumph in getting into Pseuds Corner) is mixing up his Cambridge pubs and colleges. The Eagle, gallery and all, is back in business after refurbishment of the whole of that side of Benet Street by landlords Corpus Christi. The pub which Christ's had its eye on (as college bar and buttery rather than accommodation) was the Cambridge Arms in King Street, at the back of the college. The idea was dropped by Christ's governing body and the pub is still open for public business.

Best wishes,
MICHAEL GROSVENOR MYER,
Cambridge.

Juris prudence

Sir,

As a director of a small business employing five people, I read the article about juries "In the City, EYE *921" with interest. I have served two weeks on a crown court jury and although difficult for me and a burden on my fellow director, it was no more of a problem than my annual holiday. Our customers were understanding and there was little loss of business.*

There was of course a threat that I might have to serve on a long trial and I know that our company would suffer and probably fold before the end of a three-month fraud trial. Perversely it would survive if I spent 30 days in jail for contempt of court although my criminal record would force me to resign as a director.

It is unfair to remove the right to a jury trial for fraud and it is equally unfair to expect anyone to serve long periods on a single case.

The solution is simple: all cases should be heard to a strict timetable imposed by the judge with a maximum of 10 continuous working days. Much time could be saved by pre-trial hearings to decide if there is a case, by forcing prosecution and defence to share all evidence and by allowing the jury to be present during the whole proceedings. Two weeks would force the advocates to properly prepare their cases in advance and only submit relevant and concise evidence. All too often the trial is complex, not the fraud.

The cost of cases would tumble, the courts would be freed up and the only people who could avoid jury service are those who can argue that they have been unable to find time for a holiday in the last five years.

Finally, why is it that peers, MPs, police, soldiers, clergy, lawyers, doctors, dentists, midwives, pharmacists and vets are so important that they don't have the inconvenience of jury service?

STEVE BURT,
Via e-mail.

I-SPY

Tipton, W. Midlands

Submitted by Nick Rumney. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Pay claim

Sir,

I am writing regarding your story headed "New Labour New Heartlessness".

The plaintiff's solicitors showed a masterly touch in applying under Section 4 of the National Assistance Act, 1948 (repealed), the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 (wholly inappropriate on the facts).

The council had already authorised payment to Mrs Murphy of £100 per week (under the **correct** *legislation — the Children Act 1989) by the time that her solicitors had arrived in London (at the public expense) just in time to withdraw their application without any order being made against this council.*

Incidentally, Mr Harndon is not a solicitor, but then evidently your contributor is no Bob Woodward either.

Yours faithfully,
CLLR PAUL WITTER,
Chair — Wirral Social Services Committee.

The Italian jobless

Sir,

Re: "New Labour New Heartlessness". Elizabeth Murphy has lived in Italy for 14 years, therefore surely the Italian government should be looking after her? Are you going to let our country pay for every Tom, Dick or Harry who enters it? That £100 a week given to her has to be earned by someone and paid in taxes.

Yours amazed,
JIM BROOMFIELD,
Brockley, Northants.

Living dangerously

Sir,

Many thanks to all of the PRIVATE EYE *readers who have backed* LM *magazine's campaign against ITN's use of the libel laws to silence its critics. These are the people whose support we rely on if we are to take on a multi million pound corporation — especially since the money that your correspondent Ted Hunter ("Well Red", 21 March 1997) alleges we receive from the Serbian government must have got lost in the post.*

Yours faithfully,
HELEN SEARLS,
Legal co-ordinator, Living Marxism.

Come clean

Sir,

*Re the item in Funny Old World (*EYE *921) headed "Penile Injuries from Vacuum Cleaners" and submitted by David Nicholls. The same item, with one or two minor verbal differences, is quoted on p.82 of* THE FILTH AMENDMENT *(1981) by William Rushton. Rushton quotes it as being from the* BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, *as does Mr Nicholls.*

There seem to be two possible explanations for this strange occurrence:

1) Mr Nicholls has fallen rather severely behind on his reading of the BMJ*; or*

2) Mr Nicholls is a Bounder and a Cad.

I should be interested to hear Lord Gnome's opinion of this matter. I should also be fascinated to learn how neither he nor Victor Lewis-Smith nor any of the EYE *staff noticed this duplication.*

Yours faithfully,
ANDREW CROWTHER,
Clayton, Bradford.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"De Matteo's taken to playing in midfield like a duck out of water."
PETER OSGOOD, Sky Sports
(Brian Ferris)

"Poor Miklosko. Hasn't had to make a save yet he's let three goals in."
TREVOR FRANCIS, Sky Sports
(Keith Anderson)

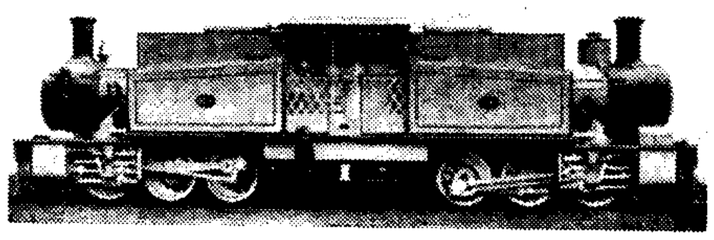
Richard Madeley: *I understand you have a little lad of 12.*
Caller: *Yes, that's right.*
Madeley: *Is he a boy or a girl?*
Caller: *A boy.*
Carlton
(Derek F. Smith)

"If is a very big preposition."
JOHN MAJOR, BBC2
(Sam Steele)

"I don't make predictions. I never have and I never will."
TONY BLAIR, Channel 4
(J.N. Finlayson)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN



SIGNAL FAILURES

THE Tories are still trying to convince voters that selling off the railways has been a success — despite the South West Trains fiasco and despite independent analysis which shows how rail privatisation is actually *costing* the country £5bn.

In his new book *The Privatisation of British Rail*, transport consultant Nigel Harris balances the so-called savings which the private companies are expected to achieve in subsidy over the next 15 years against the extra costs of the new system compared with BR before it was split up. The conclusion, as the *Eye* and many others predicted before the privatisation, is that splitting the railway into nearly 100 companies has created an astronomical demand for regulation, legal work, monitoring, chasing penalty payments and other wasteful activities.

Spent in other ways, the £5bn could have paid for a thorough modernisation of the rail network and extra services, with money left over for perhaps education or health. As it is, the £5bn is having practically no tangible benefit for travellers over and above what BR would have achieved without such largesse.

ON Challenge Cup final day, the fragmented network will show Yorkshire rugby fans just what rail passengers are getting for the extra £5bn subsidy.

Although the fixture was arranged more than a year ago and always involves about 80,000 rugby league fans travelling from the north of England to Wembley, the privatised railway has helpfully decided to *close* the main East Coast route for engineering work on cup final day next month (3 May). Fans have been told the last train of the day back to Leeds will leave London at 6.30pm.

Such traveller-unfriendly gestures are likely to become more common, however, because the private railway is structured so that the people in charge of engineering are not accountable to passengers. Railtrack carries out maintenance work when it suits Railtrack — while the totally separate train operating companies are buried under the deluge of letters of complaint.

ONE of the first privatisations a Labour government would have to consider is that of the British Rail Property Board — a decision that will have big implications for rail development.

When Railtrack was set up in 1994 the BRPB retained a large portfolio of property which was not in railway use. This included about 600 miles of track-bed and the sites of several marshalling yards and engine sheds. The BRPB was told to flog as much as it could — it quickly sold land at Holyhead ferry port which was earmarked for a rail-freight terminal — and privatisation was pencilled in for June this year.

The privatisation is on hold for the election, but after Tony Blair's recent utterances it seems the BRPB has little chance of staying out of the hands of some greedy corporation or other which will no doubt sell everything rapidly.

Several major rail projects in recent years, including Thameslink and the Jewellery Line in the West Midlands, have involved reopening tracks on land that had remained undisturbed since the Beeching axe. Such projects will be prohibitively expensive once the land has been sold and built on. If any do proceed they may well involve the public sector, in the shape of passenger transport executives or local authorities, buying back at full market value assets that until recently belonged to the state.

The BRPB's old marshalling yards are redundant only because of BR's kamikaze policy of abandoning any freight services that didn't involve full trains running from terminal to terminal. The new American owners of the rail-freight business say revitalised marshalling yards are central to their plans, but it looks as if they will have to pay top dollar for the facilities or manage without.

'Dr B. Ching'

FUNNY OLD WORLD

o "And so, Sir, in conclusion, I humbly submit that the dilemma for the resolution of the conscious outlook is conceivably the only remedy. It is said that abhorrence for the learned, as it were, in his infidelities and the inept in his devotions — our times are essentially impatient of both and especially the last. Relatively speaking.

"Let us not be pestered with assertions and half-truths, with emotion and scuffle. The resolution declares that this community of interest makes all men interested partners in the great enterprise of replacing evil with good so as to achieve the best possible. It is proverb that to cut the cackles is never conducive to mankind. Also, it is not humanitarian to be with farrago of twisted facts. God save us from the sprangles of cataclysm of the mind readers who causes sickness and bends. And the scuttles of the ship should be repaired expeditiously by this august body. It is said that one man's mickle is another's muckle.

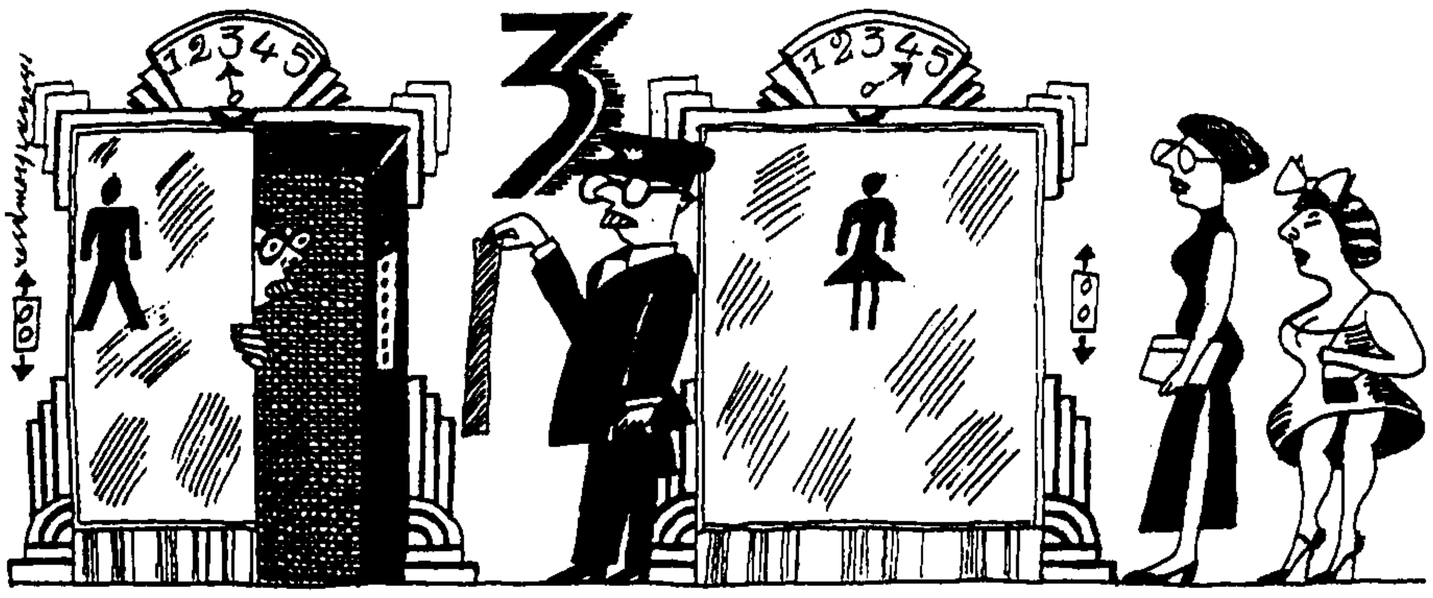
"Sir, in conclusion, I greatly appreciate and express my warm gratitude to you, by giving me the floor of this august house. Thank you." *(The Nepalese delegate addressing the UN General Assembly, December 1996. Quoted in Himal [Nepal] Jan-Feb 1997. Spotter: H Smith)*

— o —

o "The new urine detectors we have fitted to our city lifts are super and proving a great success" Mrs Cynthia Lee, chief executive officer of the Singapore Ministry of the Environment told reporters. "Thanks to super new technology, the culprits are astonished to see the doors sliding shut like a prison cell the moment they begin to widdle in the corner."

Mrs Lee was outlining the Singaporean government's latest weapons in the fight against the long-standing problem of urinators in public elevators: "When one of our officers arrives to release the culprit, they often claim that the puddle in the corner is an innocent fluid like fruit juice, rainwater, or beer, instead of a noxious pool of wee. Until now, it has been hard to prosecute those who claim innocence, because the offences often take place late at night or on public holidays, when there are no laboratories open to test the suspect fluid.

"But now it is super. We have an instant test kit, with a strip of paper coated with a super enzyme which changes colour when it comes into contact with uric acid. It turns bright red, but not as red as the faces of the miscreants when they realise we have proof of their misdeeds. Urinating in an elevator is an offence punishable with a fine of S$2,000, and we always prosecute." *(The Malaysia Star, 20/3/97. Spotter: Lesley Smith)*



— o —

o *"It was the smell that finally alerted us," a spokesman for the Tokyo city police told reporters. "Neighbours called us to the apartment of Masao Yanagisawa, complaining of an unpleasant, sickly sweet odour that had been coming from the premises for many months. Once inside we found the decomposing body of his father, Masakatsu, propped upright in a wardrobe.*

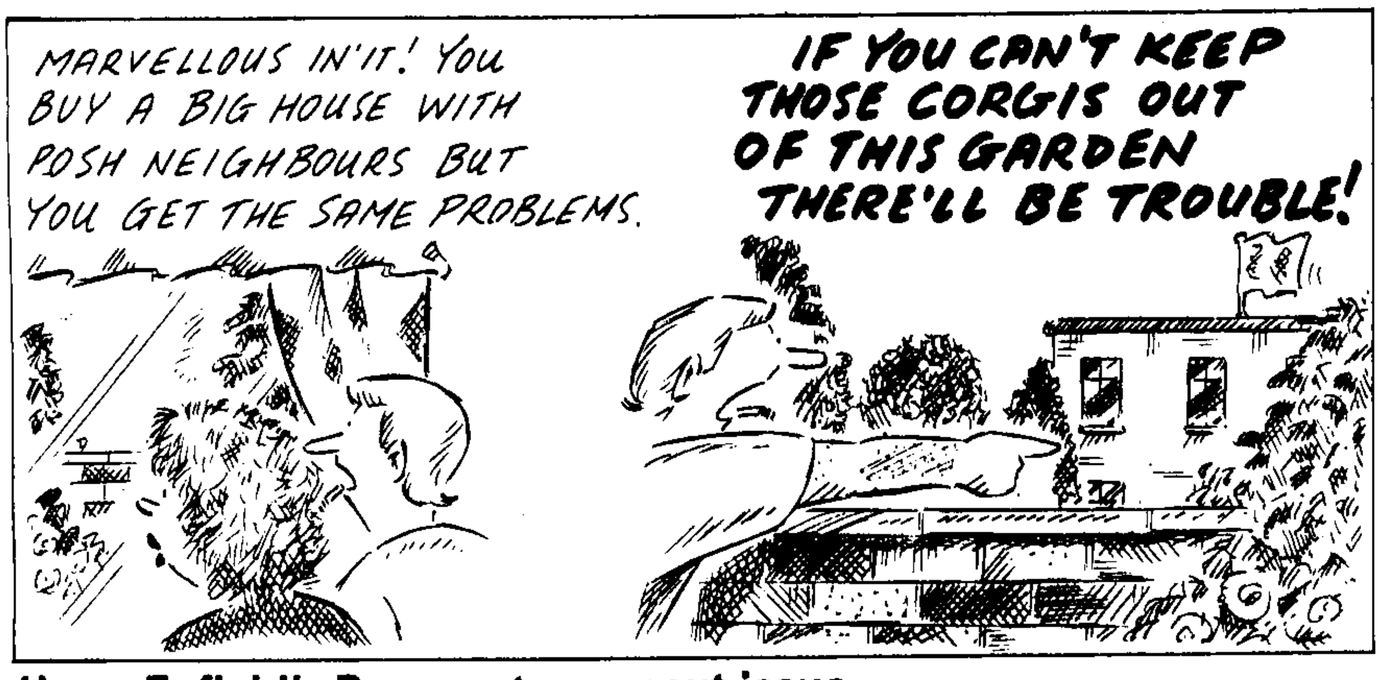
"Apparently, Masakatsu had died of natural causes in July 1994, after a long and chronic illness. But Masao, who lived with his father, hid the news from the rest of the family so that he could continue to collect his pension cheques. By the time we arrested him, he'd collected over 3.5 million yen, and we only caught him because he'd used the money to have central heating fitted, which speeded up the corpse's decomposition. It seems odd that none of the family thought it at all suspicious when Masao told them that his father had suddenly made a complete recovery and was never at home because he was out rowing his boat all day. Especially since the man had only one arm." (New Straits Times [Malaysia], 20/3/97. Spotter: N. J. Rampley)

COMPILED BY

Victor Lewis-Smith

The Lottery Winners

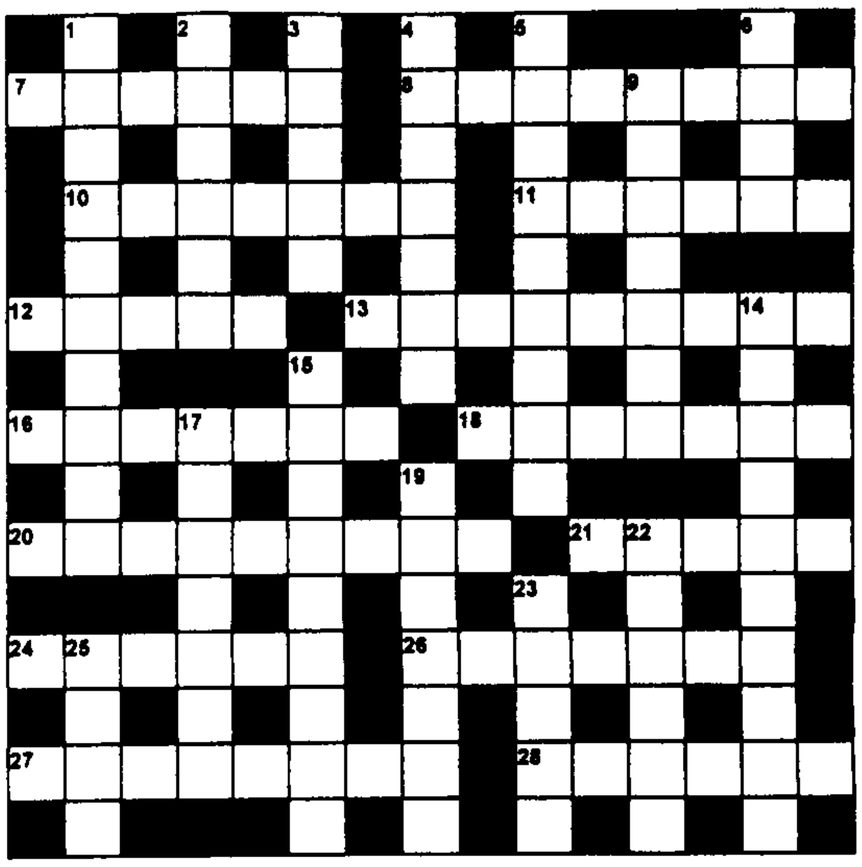
TURNER


MARVELLOUS IN'IT! YOU BUY A BIG HOUSE WITH POSH NEIGHBOURS BUT YOU GET THE SAME PROBLEMS.
IF YOU CAN'T KEEP THOSE CORGIS OUT OF THIS GARDEN THERE'LL BE TROUBLE!

Harry Enfield's Bores returns next issue

EYE CROSSWORD 77

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

7 It presents an image that daily gets more crap (6)
8 Hard Liam, not married? Go on, upset the yob! (8)
10 She might strike you as a bit of a tart (7)
11 Somehow met during rumpy pumpy — explosive stuff! (6)
12 (see 23)
13 Bonk? Do this, chaps, and there's no chance! (4,2,3)
16 Descriptive of bollocks-talking Gale at his thing? (7)
18/20 A company's revelation of its ambitious intentions — to target all unbelievers? (7,9)
20 (see 18)
21 Crap, definitely, coppers (5)
24 Convenient place for members to spout? (6)
26 'Queen in fiddle' squabble (7)
27 Can't stand tory rag — most unwelcome through your letter-box! (4,4)
28 CIA-SAS balls-up caused by one supposedly in charge of The House (6)

DOWN

1 Name for a bloody useless type; 'Spart' is its alternative (4,6)
2 Sounds like sample commercials for bad Chinese bands (6)
3 Feel grand, having the necessary to engage in bondage (5)
4 Missing hack imposes silence on Brenda and gets tabloid backing (7)
5 Sadly, HIV bloke's a revolting type (9)
6 Switch bad pupils? (4)
9 Accepted brand of condoms for prisoners (7)
14 Support for ministerial arses? (5,5)
15 Gutless bloke skirting round Camilla fiasco — the PM (9)
17 In bidet, enteritis means a lessening of tension! (7)
19 Get Ken to utter "Clever clogs!" (4-3)
22 Gin-besotted, over-the-top type of Press Secretary? (6)
23/12 Naff Ford TV ad is made by brown-nosing presenter (5,5)
25 An arse has the makings of some future Archer (4)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 25.04.97. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 76

Winner: HUW GEORGE

ACROSS: 8 Trauma 9 Implants 10 The polls 11 Kipper 12/24/6 Dirty tricks campaign 13 Newsnight 16 Chateau 18 Canning 20 Split vote 21 BSkyB 24 (see 12) 26 Balmoral 27 Legalese 28 Clarke.

DOWN: 1 Archbishop 2 Pulpit 3 Balls 4 Tipster 5 Spokesman 6 (see 12) 7 Stye 14 Hanky-panky 15 Canvasser 17 Tailcoat 19 Stables 22 Slogan 23 Slick 25 Reek.

ONLY ONE MORE NOT INCONSIDERABLY EARTH-SHATTERING INSTALMENT TO GO!

Monday

At last I have managed to get the election campaign back onto the real issues. Mr Dr Mawhinney has hired a man to dress up as a chicken which makes a very serious point — ie that Mr Blair is refusing to go on television to have a debate with me. "The chicken is a brilliant idea," as I told my wife Norman. "Surely it should be a turkey?" she said, missing the point as usual. The chicken will appear at all Mr Blair's press conferences, making a clucking noise. "You mean like Mr Rifkind," said Norman, missing the point for the second time in the space of only two sentences.

Tuesday

Mr Dr Mawhinney's chicken idea is absolutely useless, as I always said it would be. Even more useless than his lion poster, Mr Blair's demon eyes and all the other ideas he has had in the last year. The chicken has told the Daily Mirror that it is going to vote Labour. Mr Dr Mawhinney may well end up in my Bastards book, unless he comes up with a brilliant idea to win the election within the next 24 hours. I have sent him an anonymous note reading "Watch Out Mr Dr Mawhinney. Signed A Friend (ie the Prime Minister)". For some reason Norman served up an M&S Chicken Surprise for supper. I did not think this was at all funny or clever.

Wednesday

Now that we have got the chicken issue out of the way, there only remains for us to put the sleaze issue behind us for once and for all and we can then go forward to win the election, which we are undoubtedly going to do, whatever anyone thinks. As I wrote in my article for the Sun, "Why I Will Vote Conservative by John Major" (written for me by Mr Boris McNorris, who is a very clever young man with a double-first from Oxbridge University): "Make no mistake. I say this. I am the real anti-sleaze candidate in this election. Oh yes. Copyright J. Major 1997".

Our only final problem has been Mr Hamilton, the one who took the brown envelopes from Mr Fayed, but we have brilliantly solved this by ordering his local party to throw him out and find someone else. That way it will be a democratic decision taken at grass roots level and nothing to do with me. Oh no.

Thursday

Oh dear. I am not inconsiderably incandescent with fury. Mr Hamilton has told his local party that he has no intention of standing down, as he is innocent until he is proved guilty, which will not be until after the election.

The Secret Diary of John Major aged 47¾

Still, Mr Dr Mawhinney promises me that our people in Tatton will kick him out anyway, when they go to have their important meeting in their local pub, The Envelope And Fiver. Then the sleaze issue will be finally dead and buried once and for all and we can concentrate on the really important issues confronting Britain, which are:

1. How we are going to win the election.
2. How to stop Mr Blair winning the election.
3. Don't forget to buy new box of biros before our press conference.

Friday

We have now buried the Tatton issue once and for all. This is because Mr Blair and Mr Ashdown tried to play a clever trick, which in my judgement was not clever at all, in the very slightest bit whatsoever — ie they found a man in a white suit to stand against us. This made all the Tatton Conservatives so cross that they have picked Mr Hamilton after all. This is very good news, as it shows that our party is now totally united and we can now concentrate on the main issues, which are:

1. Ignoring the sleaze issue.
2. Ignoring the chicken issue.
3. Get more soap to put in the soap box.

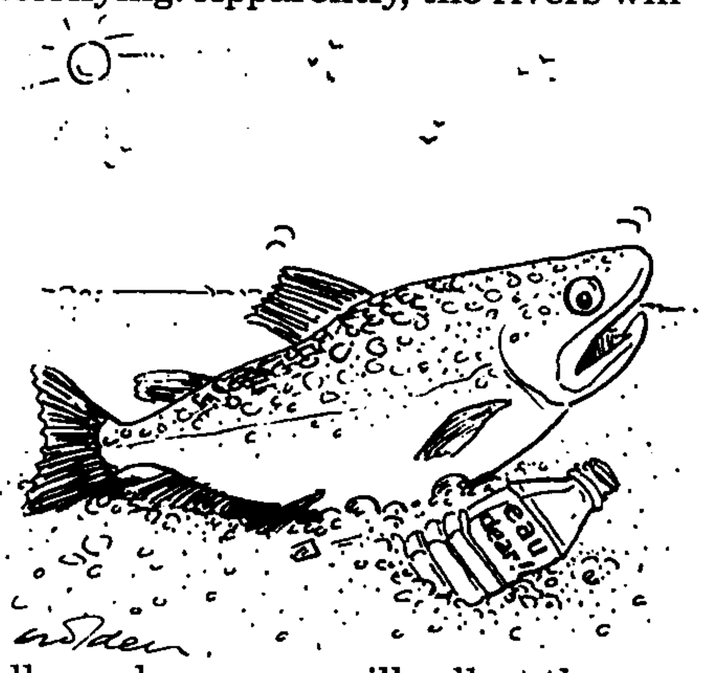
Saturday

I was not inconsiderably woken up by my brother Terry when he rang at 4am on his mobile phone. "Guess where I am, John?" he said. "I am at the Ministry of Sound." "What are you doing on government property?" I said, "You are not an authorised person." "Get a life, John," he said. "I just rang to tell you how we are all having a good laugh at the news from Tatton." "What do you mean?" I said, "This is a very serious issue." Terry giggled and said "Haven't you heard? A man called Squirrel is going to stand against Mr Hamilton as an independent Conservative. It's just like in my book, when Cyril the Squirrel jumped out of your saddle bag and you were so frightened that you fell off your bike. It's all there on page 278." I have had quite enough of Terry and his silly jokes when I am trying to win an election. I went back to sleep and had an in no small measure disturbing dream. It was of the returning officer at Tatton announcing that the winning candidate was Cyril the Squirrel wearing a white suit dressed up as a chicken.

Sunday

At last there is nothing but good news about the election. The papers are all reporting that the Labour lead in the polls has collapsed to a mere 28 percent. And Mr Heseltine has assured me that Mr Blair is cracking up under the strain of being so far ahead. "This is tremendous," I told him. "How do you know?" "I made it up," he replied. "It's a trick I learned in politics." I am sure it is true, even though he made it up.

After supper (Chicken Kiev — still not funny) I watched a very good horror film on television. It showed what life will be like in Britain when Labour wins the election. It was terrifying. Apparently, the rivers will



all run dry, no one will collect the rubbish, giant rats will roam the streets and everyone will be very unhappy and sorry they voted Labour. No wonder Mr Blair is cracking up, if this is what he is planning for us.

Monday

The tide has certainly turned. It has done a U-turn, just like Mr Blair. (This is my new joke for the week written for me by Mr Horace Dorris who is another very bright young man who writes for the *Spectator* magazine.)

The newspapers now show that Mr Blair is only 27 points ahead and if this goes on the gap will have closed to only 26% by polling day. Then Mr Blair will really crack up.

Tuesday

Mr Portaloo today told our emergency election meeting that Labour were wobbling and that the reason they were wobbling was because at last the Leader had spoken out.

"Do you mean my speech about more selection in state education?" I asked. "No," said Mr Portaloo with his irritating smile. "I mean Lady Thatcher's speech about how you weren't quite so terrible as Prime Minister after all."

Everyone laughed, showing that we are all in high spirits as we head for May 1st.

MASS RALLY HAILS 'SAVIOUR OF THE FATHERLAND'

by Our Political Staff **Joshua Nuremberg**

Alexandra Platz, Sontag

THEY came in their thousands to witness the rebirth of a nation: the young, the old, the rich, the very rich and the barking mad.

As the floodlights arced across the sky and the strains of Wagner echoed above the waving banners, the High Command of the Reicherendum Party strutted onto the stage. A roar went up from the expectant masses. "Who are they?" they shouted as one.

Jams Tomorrow

They were all there, the men who would at last restore a sense of national pride in this country and drive out once and for all the rat-like foreigners from France and Germany who were eating away at the very fabric of British nationhood. One after the other they took the platform:

- Naturalist and serial keeper-loser **John Aspinall**, who believes that the British tribe has been watered down by lesser breeds and should be culled by tigers.
- Actor **Edward Fox**, who proved his worth to the Führer by staging an assassination attempt on the Federalist De Gaulle in the Day of the Jackal. He also showed his Nazi sympathies when he came to the throne as Edward the Eighth.
- Wild-eyed bearded scientist **David Bellamy**, who preaches extermination for human beings so that animals can have "lebensraum".

Hermann Goering, one of the speakers.

- The late **Sir Laurens van der Post**, South African Mystic and paedophile. Speaking through a medium (Madame Barkworth) he told the rally that Sir James would restore "a sort of er... oneness thingy... in a real sense... like in my book 'The Kalahari on $10 a day' ".
- Historian **Andrew Roberts**, who has rewritten history to show that Britain was betrayed in her hour of need by the Quisling Heath who sold the country to the Germans for £5 in 1973.

Tomorrow Belongs to Jams

But none of these speakers could match the extraordinary power of the party's magnetic mastermind, Sir Adolf Goldschmidt, his voice rising to a crazed shriek as he told the party: "I have been expecting you Mr Bond. But for you there is no escape. Goodbye, Mr Bond."

And with that, Sir James activated a giant laser gun which fired a deadly ray at Brussels.

Unfortunately nothing happened but the crowds saluted him anyway, making the rafters ring with their passionate cries of: "I think I'll probably vote Conservative, actually."

Adolf Hitler is 106.

VOTE LABOUR AND A BIG BLACK HAIRY THING WITH SHARP TEETH WILL JUMP OUT OF YOUR WARDROBE AND GOBBLE UP EVERYONE IN THE HOUSE INCLUDING THE DOG AND BUDGIE

Alternative Rocky Horror Servicebook

No. 94: Service For The Giving Of Arms In Return For Money (for St Paul's only)

President: Who sponsoreth this event?

Chairman of Lockheed *(or it may be some other manufacturer of deadly weapons)*: I doeth.

President: Blessed are the arms makers.

Congregation: For they shall make arms.

President: Give war in our time O Lord.

Congregation: Because that is the way we maketh our money.

President: O Lord, open thou our lips.

Congregation: And we shall receive free canapés and champagne in the hospitality area.

(All face the hospitality area which was formerly the altar. There shall then follow a suitable anthem. It may be Handel's Music for the Royal Firearms or the theme tune from Guns of Navarone)

Canon: I am a canon.

All: You're fired. Ha ha ha.

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ADVERTISEMENT

Bell Washes Whiter Than White

Yes, it's Martin Bell's doorstep challenge! Would you swap your dirty MP for a bright, clean former war correspondent?

Of course you wouldn't. You're a Tory living in Tatton.

But listen — New Formula Bell is biologically engineered to remove even the toughest sleaze.

Guaranteed to get rid of the following stains:

● ***Filthy Fayed*** ● ***Brown Envelopes*** ● ***Mixed Grylls***

So, if you can face up to the Bell Doorstep Challenge you can win yourself a candidate who has no idea what he is doing.

Manufactured by LibLab Brothers plc, Staines, Tatton.

UP FRONTERS

at Elton John's Fancy Dress Birthday Party

Adam Faith is having a **Sir Walter Raleigh** good time!! And **Elizabeth the First** has come Hurley to join in the hilarious fun!

Dawn French **Hardy** needs no introduction!! Particularly not to Joanna, who is having a Lumley time as **Stan**!? Yes, they're having an abfab night out as they join in the hilarious fun!

Richard and Judy meet their Waterloo as **Napoleon** and the **Duke of Wellington**! Yes it *is* tonight **Josephine** as the TV couple join in with the other celebrities in the hilarious fun!

Vinnie Jones is a revolting sight as **Spartacus**!! Look at him slaving away?! Perhaps he's going to tackle Elton from behind to add to the hilarious fun which everyone is having!!

David Bowie is the **Cowieboy** of the night!?! Ten-Gallon hats off to Ziggie Prairiedust as he joins in the hilarious fun!

Ned Sherrin is revolting as the Mexican rebel **Zapata**!! *(You've done this one. Ed.)* And who is stringing you along?! None other than Lady Ocharina Frost as gypsy queen **Carmen**! Or is it Anna Ford as **Mary Queen of Scots**?! No, I'll tell you who it is — it's Mariella Frostrup as **Tarzan's Jane**?! And actually, looking at my notes again, it might be Sir Robin Day as **Hopalong Cassidy!** Anyway, whoever it is, they are having hilarious fun in hilarious style at the decade's most hilarious *(You're fired. Ed.)*

Reprinted from the New York Times

FERGIE JOINS TOP PAPER

Fergiana Slagg!!

The Royal they couldn't gag!!

PRINCE ANDREW?! Don'tchalove-him?? OK so we're divorced — but that doesn't stop us a-cuddlin' and a-snugglin' when I feel like it?! And I feel like it now?! Hallo Big Boy, how about it?!!

PRINCE ANDREW!? Fancy him knocking about with that slapper Fergie!? What a twit!? No wonder they're divorced!? Come on Andy!? Do the decent thing and give me some more money!?

THE EDITOR of the New York Times! What a great bloke?! He's given me a column!? I asked him what kind of length he had in mind?!! Get it?!

Here they are — Fergie's Hunky Hustings Honchos!

● **SIR GEORGE GARDINER**!! Mmm?! OK so he looks like the back end of a bus – who doesn't?!

● **JOHN PRESCOTT**?! They say he's got a big mouth! Ample room for Fergie's Big Toes?! Geddit!?

● **JACOB REES-MOGG** — Crazy name, crazy father!?!

Byeeeee!!

© The New York Times

THE BOOK OF BENJAMIN

Chapter 94

1. And it came to pass in the days when Benjamin that is called son of Net-an-ya-hu was ruling over Israel, that he went up even unto Jerusalem.
2. And in the part of that city that lieth towards the east, Benjamin saw many tents, wherein dwelt the Arafites, the Hamasites and all the other ites that make up the *tribes* of the enemies of the children of Israel.
3. Then Benjamin waxed wroth in his heart, even as the porcupine waxeth wroth when it spieth the desert dog coveting its egg that it might eat of it unto itself.
4. Even in this wise did Benjamin that is called Net-an-ya-hu become jolly batey.
5. And he cried out to the children of Israel, saying Jerusalem, the holy city, is our city, even as it hath been foretold by Moses and all the prophets.
6. (For it is indeed one of the great coincidences of this book that the prophets have always foretold whatever thing it is that suiteth the case best at the present time.)
7. Yet now this holy place hath been defil-ed by the tents of the Philistines *(surely "Palestinians". Ed.)*
8. And Benjamin commanded the children of Israel to rise up and to go forth from the city, even unto the hill that is called Har-Homa, which is to say the place of residential development;
9. And there he commanded them to build many attractive, low-rise chalet-style homes, each with swimming pool and panoramic view of the Holy City (call Netanyahu Developments Plc, no relation, on 01746-7121 or, via the Internetanyahu, benhomes@jehovah.smiting.co.Israel).
10. And then the voice of A-ra-fat was heard in the land, even he that weareth the towel upon his head, and spake these words.
11. Benjamin, son of Net-an-ya-hu, hearken unto me. If the children of Israel lay so much as one stone upon another, we shall pick up the stones and cast them back at you, even an hundredfold.
12. And in the land of Us, that is called A-mer-ica, they looked upon these things and saw that they were not good.
13. And he that was king of the Amer-ican-ites, he that was called Clint-stone, summoned Benjamin even unto the house that is white, and instructed him that he must call off the dozers of bull and still the mixers of cement.
14. But Benjamin the son of Netanyahu hardened his heart, saying "What I have spoken, I have spoken. For I am the Lord's anointed, by a majority of 0.01 percent, and therefore whatsoever I sayeth, I sayeth."
15. And shortly afterwards the smiting began, as per usual.

NEXT WEEK: How Sara, the wife of Benjamin, appeareth on the cover even of the Telegraph magazine, showing her golden calves and telling it like it isn't.

Daily Mail, Friday, April 18, 1997

Why Oh Why Should We Listen To This Self-Important Journalist?

asks Paul Johnson

WHY on earth should anyone take the slightest bit of notice of this ridiculous attempt by a member of the media to intervene in the democratic process?

This man is not a politician, but a mere journalist whose job is to stand on the sidelines, remaining objective like I do, and not tell people to vote for Mr Blair, which they should.

MORE PROZAC PLEASE

Bell is the worst type of BBC creep. Just because he has been in the front line in the Falklands, there is no excuse for him trying to lecture us now on what kind of soup we should eat.

These people in the media are getting completely above themselves.

Some of them are stark, staring mad, as you can tell by just looking at them.

Let us hope that the people of Tatton have the good sense to lynch Mr Bell and string him up for his self-regarding arrogance.

WHERE'S THAT PROZAC?

The thought of some soup-crazed media hireling standing on his soapbox to lay down the law about which way to vote is sickening.

In fact it is little short of treason. The only man who can save us now is my old friend Margaret Thatcher.

That is why everyone should vote Labour at this election.

Ask not for whom the Bell tolls. It tolls for me.

Marigold, you can let me out now. I've finished my piece now and I feel a lot better.

Come on, open this door. I've got a gun you know. Don't be a silly girl.

© The Daily Mail, the Daily Telegraph, the Spectator and all other papers

WORLD OF ART

BODY SNATCHING ROW GROWS

by Our Political Staff
Michael Burke and David Hare

ONE OF Britain's leading artists was today accused of using old bits of long-dead people in a disgraceful exhibition which he claimed was all his own.

Mr Tony Blair, one of the leaders of the so-called Labour Movement, was discovered when members of the public recognised the hand of an old woman in his work.

"It was obviously Mrs Thatcher," said one shocked observer. "It was unmistakeable. Her hair, her teeth, her staring eyes, her smile, her views on the merits of widescale privatisation... they were all there.

"This is disgusting," he continued. "Blair has been grave-robbing in the most obscene fashion."

Mr Blair, however, defended his display and said: "This is a work of genius. I am going through my Blue Period."

SUPERMODELS KERBER

NAOMI INTRODUCES HER MUM TO NEW BOYFRIEND JOAQUÍN CORTES!
MUM, THIS IS MY NEW BOYFRIEND WHOM I LOVE!
YOU MUST BE JOAQUÍN!
WHY DO GIRLFRIENDS' MUMS ALWAYS SAY THAT WHEN THEY FIRST MEET ME?

Greek Myths Revisited

The Boy Who Flew Too Close To The Sun

TONY BLICARUS was a young boy who was a prisoner in a very old Labour Party. Blicarus longed to be free and to become Prime Minister. So he worked hard and long on making himself a wondrous pair of wings, fashioned from bits and pieces he collected from old speeches by the late Queen Margaret. Finally the day came when Blicarus was able to put on the wings, with the aid of some special wax spun by the clever engineer Mendaedalus. But when Blicarus had donned the wings, Mendaedalus gave his young pupil a solemn warning. "Whatever you do," he said, "don't get too near the Sun, because it will make it too hot, your support will melt and you will come crashing down to earth."

But young Blicarus was a headstrong lad, and he soared up and up in the opinion polls until he nearly reached heaven itself. "It's so blue up here," he shouted, "I can even get close to the Sun."

But even as he spoke the Sun's malign power began to wreak its fateful havoc on those wondrous, see-through wings.

Blicarus suddenly found himself plummeting to earth like a stone, to be lost forever.

© W.F. Daedalus

Cooking The Books

with Michel Roux

Ingredients:

400,000 pounds of money

2 pension funds

1 chef

Put the money in one pension fund then, after a while, put it in another one but don't tell the Revenue.

CAUTION: This recipe may burn your fingers.

TV Highlights

BBC2, 2.30pm

The Man In The White Suit (1997)

CLASSIC British comedy in which a former war correspondent (played by Alec Guinness) puts on a magic white suit and decides to stand for Parliament. Trouble starts when he arrives in his constituency, only to find that he is expected to know what he is doing. The incorruptible white suit is of no use, since people prefer the dirty suit worn by his wide-boy opponent (played by Terry Thomas).

Unforgettable climax comes when his opponent's formidable wife (Diana Dors) asks him why he is standing and he cannot think of an answer.

ITV, 7.30pm

Corruption Street (Granada)

IN tonight's episode, Ken Barlow (played by Bill Roache) makes a surprise visit to his old mate Neil, who is standing for parliament as the Pro-Sleaze candidate. Neil thinks it will help him to have Ken on his side in the election, but the punters think otherwise and give him the big thumbs-down. Neil's wife Chrissie blows her top and Ken returns to Wetherfield with his tail between his legs.

BBC1, 9.30pm

Men Behaving Badly (new series)

GROWN-UP comedy as modern lads Martin Bell and "Bonking Bob" Stewart decide to leave their wives for other women, then stand for parliament on the "Mr Clean" ticket.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam: Allen Ginsberg

So. Farewell
Then Allen
Ginsberg.

"I saw the
Best minds of my
Generation destroyed
By madness, starving
Hysterical naked,
Dragging themselves
Through the negro
Streets at dawn
Looking for an
Angry fix."

Yes. That
Was your
Catchphrase.

You were a
Beat Poet.

Now you
Are a
Dead Beat Poet.

So no
Change there
Then.

E.J. Thribbsberg (71½)

COURT CIRCULAR

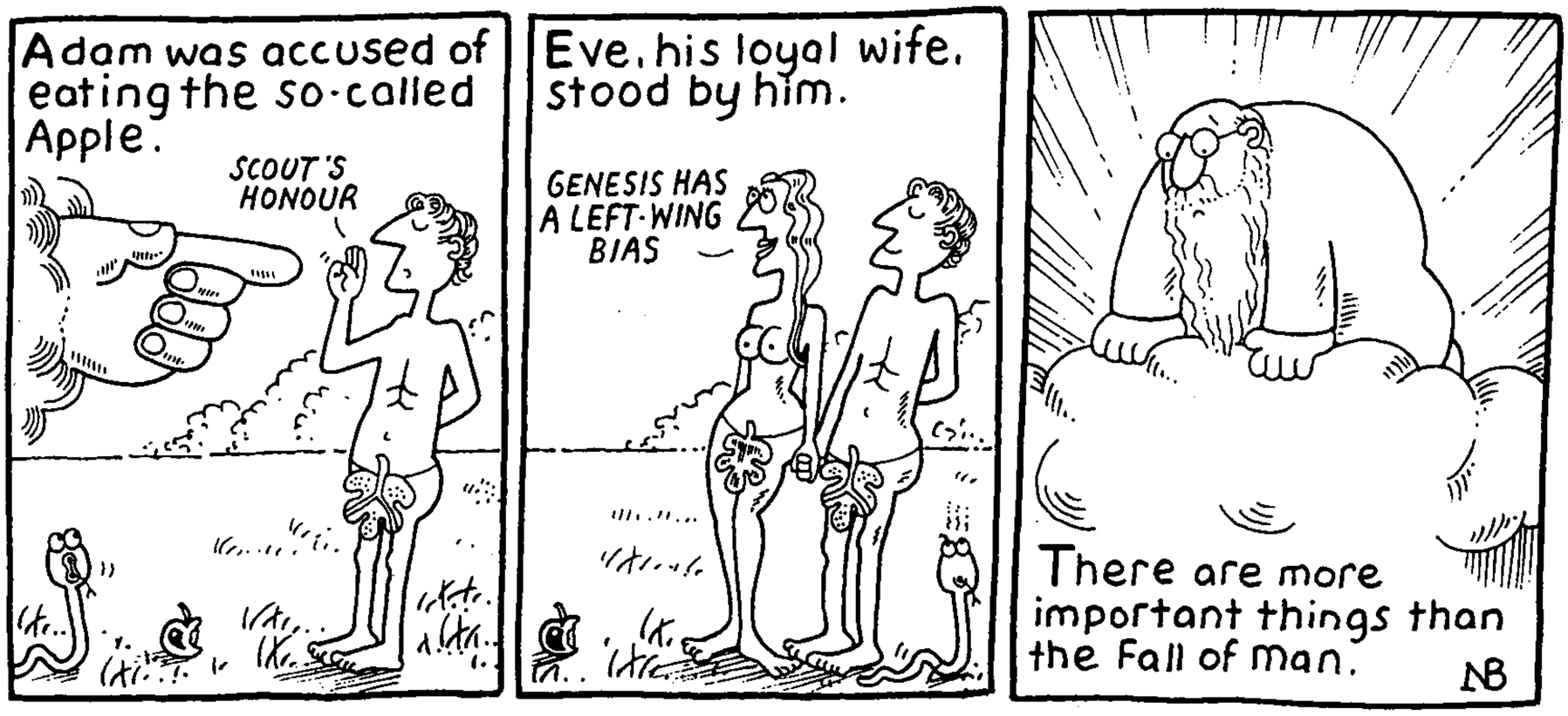
KENSINGTON PALACE

Her Ex-Royal Highness, Diana the Princess of Wales, will today attend a punch-up in the street. She will be stalked by Mr Steve Snapper, a freelance photographic journalist. She will then ask a member of the public, Mr Chuck Bodybuilder, to beat up Mr Snapper and smash his camera. She will explain to Inspector Knacker of the Metropolitan Police that she is under a great deal of stress due to the announcement that she is much richer than her former husband.

HIGHGROVE

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales will today meet his bank manager, Mr Peregrine Night-Safe of Coutts, who will refuse him any further overdraft facilities and ask him for his Mastercard back, reminding him sternly that it is the property of the bank.

TORYTIME: Adam & Eve


Adam was accused of eating the so-called Apple.
SCOUT'S HONOUR
Eve, his loyal wife, stood by him.
GENESIS HAS A LEFT-WING BIAS
There are more important things than the Fall of man.
NB

The Daily Cawdorgraph

Price 1 Mickle

Macbeth 'Innocent Till Proven Guilty' says Lady Macbeth

by Our Political Staff Will 'Hutton' Shakespeare

IN THE strife-torn constituency of Glamis and Cawdor Thereafter, the wife of beleaguered Thane Neil Macbeth has intervened to defend her husband.

"There is no evidence to support the allegations that my husband has murdered King Duncan for personal gain," she told a rally of peasants. "In this country, a man is innocent until proved to the contrary, and although my husband has admitted the offence he has yet to be convicted of any misdemeanour."

COME YOU SPIRITS... UNSEAT ME HERE

Lady Christine has often been described as the power behind the throne, and her determination to retain the seat may prove the decisive factor in the campaign for the kingdom.

Meanwhile, the former warrior-correspondent Martin McDuff has declared himself as an "anti-corruption" alternative to Macbeth.

IS THIS A TENNER THAT I SEE BEFORE ME?

"What I'm hoping to do here," he said, "is to mobilise the grass roots of Burnham Wood so that there is a major shift towards Dunsinane. That should finish off Macbeth."

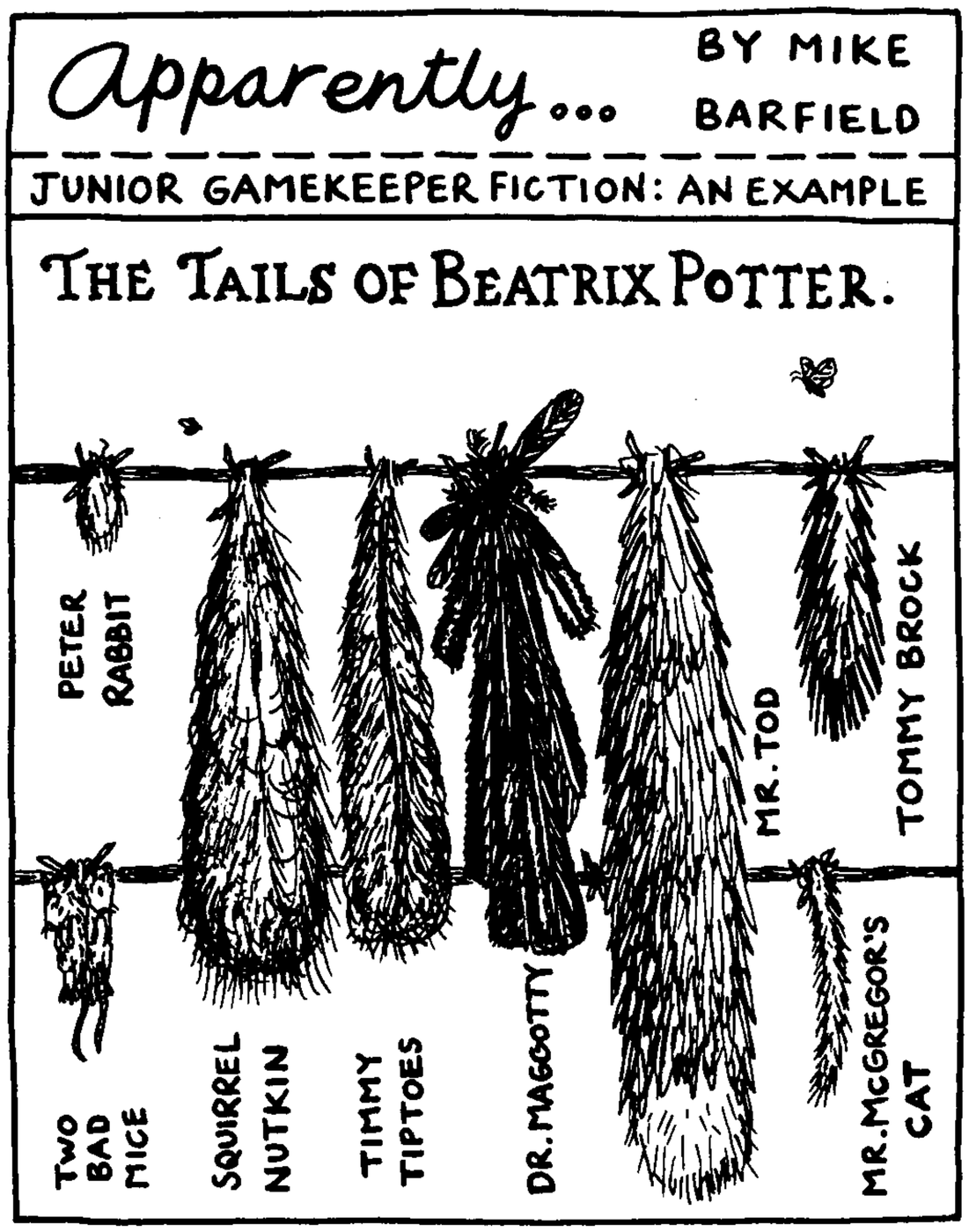
Lady Muck was however unrepentant. She confronted MacBell in his trademark white armour and shouted at him "Out! Out! Damned spotless candidate!"

ON OTHER PAGES

Obituary: 'Bunter' Banquo 11
Your Thanes Tonight 13
Unfunny cartoon by Mac 27

Apparently... BY MIKE BARFIELD

JUNIOR GAMEKEEPER FICTION: AN EXAMPLE



WHAT YOU MISSED

The Today Programme Radio 4

Humphrys: And now it's time for the weather. More bad news you've got for us, I believe Michael.

Fish: 'Fraid so, John. Another beautiful spring day, with temperatures well into the 20s. That's 80 degrees fahrenheit for old-fashioned listeners. Sun shining everywhere, pleasant light breeze, birds singing, daffodils blooming, and the outlook for the weekend is much the same.

Humphrys: So that's the gloomy story then. By the end of the week there will be widespread drought, huge fires raging uncontrolled all over the countryside, and of course millions of cases of skin cancer, asthma and hay fever. We're going over now to Ken Stiggis, who is in the global warming front line in Burford.

(Sound of birds singing, lawn mowers whirring and strimmers strimming)

Humphrys: So, Ken, tell us about the spring terror that is gripping Britain.

Stiggis: It's a scene here of absolute devastation, John. Gardeners I spoke to this morning have never seen anything like it. There's so much cherry blossom that millions of trees could soon be collapsing under the weight.

Sue McGhastly: *(jumping in excitedly)*: Could there be any deaths, Ken, as a result of the trees collapsing? Any fatalities or, failing that, horrible injuries to report?

Stiggis: Well, not as yet, Sue, but I've got here the head of the local ambulance service, Mr Barry Stretcher. Mr Stretcher, what plans have you got to cope with the tidal wave of skin cancer victims predicted as a result of this killer spring sunshine?

Stretcher: Good morning.

Stiggis: And what about the hay-fever sufferers? Have you got enough hospital beds to cope with an epidemic of this size?

Stretcher: Er... the Burford Ambulance Service has got a long and proud history of service to the Burford community in the Burford area; and we are confident that we can make a positive response to any demands that are placed on our resources with regard to this one, though there are none to speak of at this present time.

Sue McGhastly: So, it's a far cry then from the days of Wordsworth when he wrote his immortal lines: "Oh to be in England now that spring is here." Today, Wordsworth would find a parched desert filled with people choking to death on the cherry blossom, in the worst outbreak of spring since records began.

If you are worried about any of the effects of this spring catastrophe, you can ring an advice line set up by the Department of Health on 0865-5385000.

Humphrys: And now it's time for Thought For The Day. And the speaker from our East Grinstead studio is L. Ron Cupboard, leader of the Church of Scientology and Advanced Dianetics.

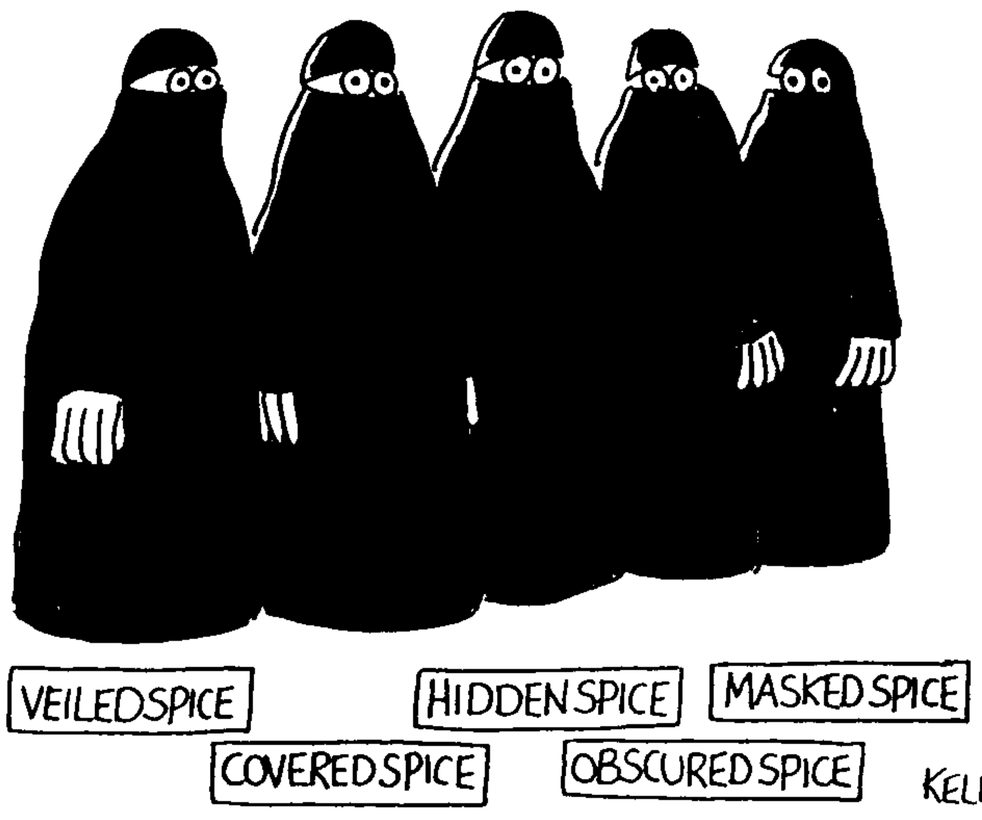
Cupboard: When I was an Egyptian galley slave, in the reign of the Pharaoh Al Fayed the Magnificent, my old grandmother used to say to me: "Ron, east, west, wear a vest." And in the freezing cold springs which we used to have in those days, it was good advice, I can tell you. If you would like to know more about our work as lunatics in the Church of Scientology, send as much money as you've got to me, L. Rameses Cupboard, care of the Hale-Bopp Comet, East Grinstead.

Sue McGhastly: I'm afraid there are still no reports of deaths from the cherry blossom, but a man who's got a lot of questions to answer is the man in our Westminster studio, Environment Secretary L. Ron Gummer. Mr Gummer, this appalling spring weather is all your fault and it's going to leave you with blood on your hands, isn't it?

Gummer: Let me begin by saying that this government has spent more money on spring in real terms than...

(Cont'd 94 KHz)

The Afghan Spice Girls



That Liam and Patsy Wedding Breakfast in full

Coke

— ❋ —

Coke

— ❋ —

Coke

— ❋ —

To follow:

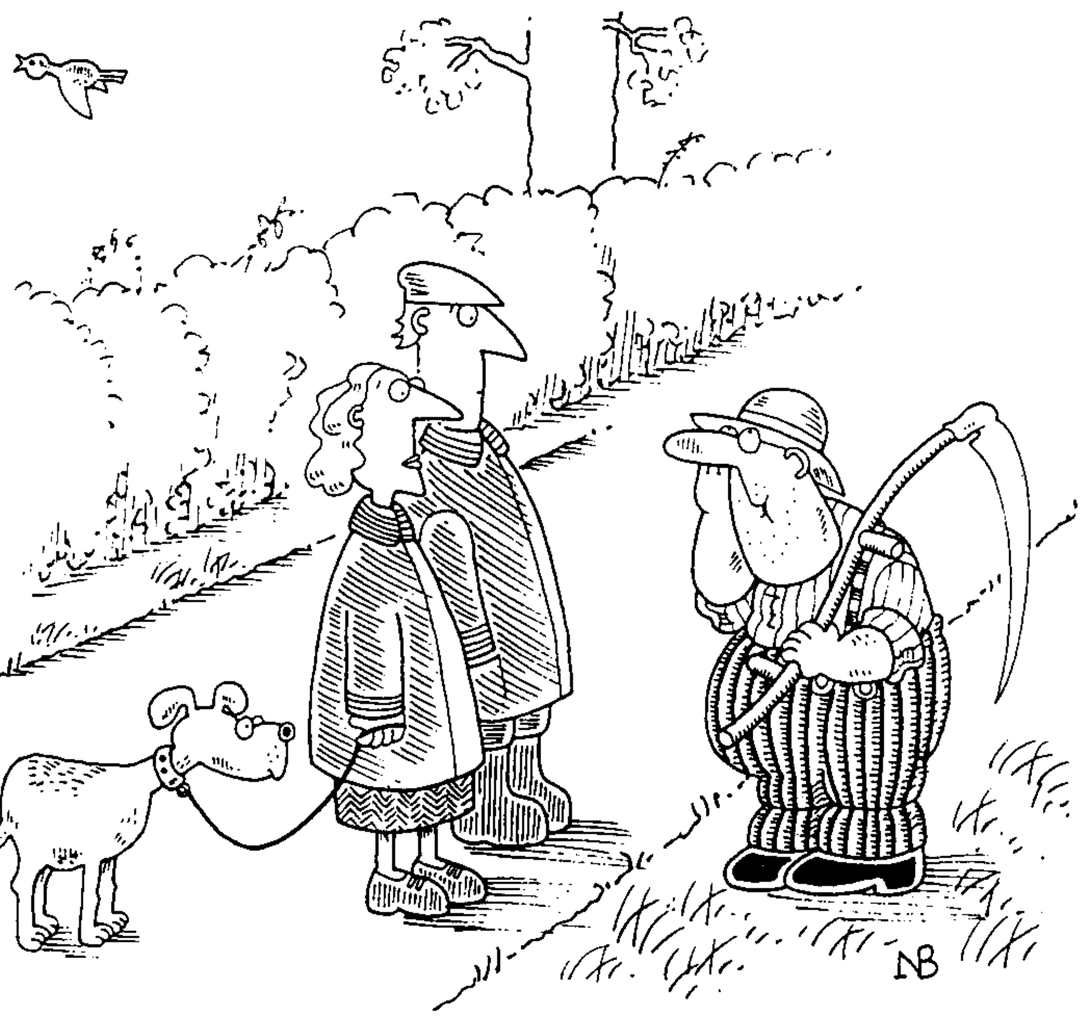
Slice of Wedding Coke

— ❋ —

To drink:

Coke

The bride will enter to the tune of "The Cokey-Cokey" (arranged A. Dealer). The guests will have a traditional English nose-up. (Surely some mistake? Ed).



"When first the cuckoo speak 'is mind, the Christmas catalogue bain't far behind"

In tomorrow's Eye

ELECTION 97 SPECIAL

480-Page Daily Round-Up Of All The News And Views About The Campaign You Have No Intention Of Reading

[X] **On The Campaign Trail With John Prescott In Hemel Hempstead.** *Simon Hoggart* **reports.**

[X] *Hugo Young* **Takes An In-Depth Look At Hemel Hempstead Woman.**

[X] **Poll Of Polls Update — Where They Stand On Day 47.**

[X] *Simon Heffer* **on The Phenomenon Of Hemel Hempstead Man.**

[X] **Leader — As Hemel Hempstead Goes, So Goes The Nation by** *Charles Moore.*

[X] **Baldwin Crosses The Rubicon —** *W.F. Deedes* **recalls the historic Hemel Hempstead by-election of 1931.**

[X] **Is TV Giving Us The True Picture Of What Is Going On In Hemel Hempstead? asks** *Mark Beardie.*

[X] **The Ashdown Factor — Focus on the Lib Dem Challenge in Hemel Hempstead.**

[X] **The** *Valerie Grove* **Friday Interview — Tory candidate's wife Sandra Worplesdon talks about her campaign role on the doorsteps of Hemel Hempstead.**

[X] **Manifesto Watch — How The Parties Differ On The Key Issue of Badger Hunting.**

[X] *William Rees-Mogg* **writes on The Hemel Hempstead Factor And The Single Currency.**

[X] **In Lighter Vein —** *Craig Brown* **takes a sideways look at the blue-rinse and aromatherapy brigade in Hemel Hempstead.**

PLUS FREE Cut-Out-'n'-Keep Full-Colour Election Map highlighting boundary changes, key marginals and Celtic burial sites. *(Surely this should be in Weekend Eye? Ed).*

PLUS HOW the legal profession will be voting. Picture-Poll of Hemel Hempstead's top solicitors.

And much, much more.

SIR JAMES IN CORNWALL

Literary Review

Grumpy Theroux and through

Kowloon Tong
Paul Theroux
(Hamish Hamilton, £16.99)

THIS year Paul Theroux celebrates his 30th anniversary as a published writer. The three decades have brought forth 36 books, of which two have been published in England in this half-year alone: a 660-page *Collected Stories*, and now a new novel, *Kowloon Tong*, set in the final days of British rule in Hong Kong.

You might think a literary career so productive and relatively successful — Theroux is now guaranteed solus reviews in Britain and America — might have made a writer happy. But no. While Nick Hornby carefully stakes out territory as the nice and easy-going bloke of modern writing, Theroux is going for the rival prize as the nasty and hard-going guy.

When Theroux recently took part in an internet interview session organised by his publishers, a net-head, having being "flamed" by one of the writer's replies, urgently keyed in: "Why are you so grumpy?" It is a good question. For, even by the standards of this Victor Meldrew of contemporary letters, *Kowloon Tong* is the grumpiest book he has ever written.

Part of Theroux's problem is the old writer's nightmare of being liked most for the books he personally likes least. Written largely to finance his cherished novel-writing, the travel books (from *The Great Railway Bazaar* on) now completely eclipse the fiction in the popular imagination.

But there's a deeper problem of identity. The Hong Kong handover and Theroux make a perfect fit, because the novelist is literature's stateless citizen. Exiled from his native America in the 1960s — first by teaching in the Far East (Vietnam-avoidance) and then by marriage to an Englishwoman — he was subsequently exiled from his adopted England in the late 80s by divorce.

His statelessness further complicated by his lengthy global treks researching travel books, Theroux was excluded from literary cliques on both sides of the Atlantic. Denied the Pulitzer because he was regarded as a kind of limey, he was ineligible for the Booker on account of his US passport. Most long-serving novelists eventually become bitter about perceived lack of recognition, but Theroux had a rare excuse for double grumpiness.

With nowhere to call home — his current exile is Hawaii, technically America but not really — Theroux has become the pan-racist of modern writing. *The Happy Isles of Oceania* (travel) stuck it to the New Zealanders. *Riding The Iron Rooster* (travel) scorched the Chinese. *Millroy The Magician* (novel) lashed into Middle America.

Now, in *Kowloon Tong*, Hong Kong's polyglot community offers him a thrilling multiplicity of targets. The English are stupid, fat, sexually inadequate, provincial, living on a disgusting diet of stodge and dark brown tea. The Hong Kong Chinese men are devious, superstitious, small, half-blind, intolerant of alcohol, living on a disgusting diet of glutinous gristle and dark green tea.

The Hong Kong Chinese women perform blow jobs for their English bosses and go down on all fours for them but then plead: "I need passport, mister." The mainland Chinese are psychopathic, untrustworthy, diet as above. The Americans are flash, gabby, vulgar, stupid. Theroux might say that the point of the book is that all of the resident communities distrust each other but the truth is that *he* distrusts all of *them*. Only a deracinated writer could have written a novel so even-handedly offensive in matters of race.

If you can live with that, then *Kowloon Tong* is, as usual with Theroux, a cracking good read. It also marks a pleasing switch in the direction of his fiction. In recent books, Theroux had been increasingly taking himself and his profession as his subject. The novel *My Secret Life*, scenes from the life of a suspiciously familiar American-Anglo novelist and travel writer called Andre Parent, was followed by the novel *My Other Life*, scenes from the life of an even more familiar American-Anglo novelist and travel writer called — wait for it — Paul Theroux. In *Kowloon Tong*, however, he sensibly restricts his name to the cover and his autobiography to the back-flap.

Kowloon Tong looks like being a severe case of the Theroux problem. English critics will worry that he hasn't got the expat slang exactly right; American critics will fret that he is a tad racist about the Chinese. Theroux is going to get even grumpier. Even so, sad as it may be to see the British flag going down in Honkers, it can only be cheering that, from the evidence of Theroux's return to traditional narrative, the pennant of post-modernism is also being lowered over the novel in English.

POETS CORNERED

IMAGINE deliberately writing the worst poem you can and submitting it to a poetry competition run by the serious-sounding International Library of Poetry.

You expect your poem to be instantly rejected for its obvious lack of rhyme, reason, scansion or anything resembling quality, but this august-sounding body writes back praising you to the skies, telling you you're a semi-finalist in its 1997 International Open Amateur Poetry Competition, and revealing how much it would like to publish your poem in a "classic, edition-quality hardbound volume" this summer called *Light of the World*.

Oh, and should you want to buy *Light of the World*, you can get thirty quid off the publisher's list price of £69.95 and have it for £39.95 (additional copies, £30).

Then there's a similar opportunity for those writers who are told they have been elected to the online "International Poetry Hall of Fame". Do they want their poem, and details of themselves, stuck on the internet for £99 (plus £15 a year maintenance thereafter)? You do, after all, get a "beautiful walnut-finish plaque" commemorating your "election".

Smell several rats? Sadly the *Eye* didn't when it accepted an advert from the "library", which is based at "Poets House" in Cremers Road, Sittingbourne. But it does now.

The "library" is "an affiliate of the widely respected US National Library of Poetry" — an outfit that is indeed widely respected since its owner, Watermark Press of Maryland, is possibly the only publisher to make money out of "poetry".

Profits are high. Each volume has at least 3,000 would-be Wordsworths crammed in it, and if each buys a copy, plus one for Auntie Nellie and Uncle Sid, that is a sizeable return — for the publisher anyway. For an extra $20 poets can include a brief "biographical and philosophical statement"; and for

MAMMOTH book catalogue

$38 they get a plaque with their poem; and for $29 more, a cassette. Then there is an invitation to become a member of the International Society of Poets "because of your poetic accomplishments" and in return for a $125 cheque. Then follows a nomination as an International Poet of the Year and an invitation to the convention with a registration fee of $495.

Gullible potential E.J. Thribbs could bankrupt themselves fairly quickly. Entrants from across the world have indeed turned up in Washington for the conventions, misled by hustling advertising into thinking they have won. The letters read "Dear E.J. Thribb, A hush suddenly falls over the audience... imagine yourself... at an international gathering of a thousand poets... publishers, editors... your friends and family... the media, all waiting expectantly for the announcement. Finally it comes... Ladies and gentlemen, and fellow poets... our 1995 Poet of the Year... and Grand Prize winner of $5,000 and a book publishing contract is... E.J. Thribb."

Of course the letter doesn't mention the other 2,000 who turned up in response to similar letters, or that the contract is for 1,000 books to be printed for the winners to sell themselves.

Sounds like a nice little earner — for someone. You have been warned.

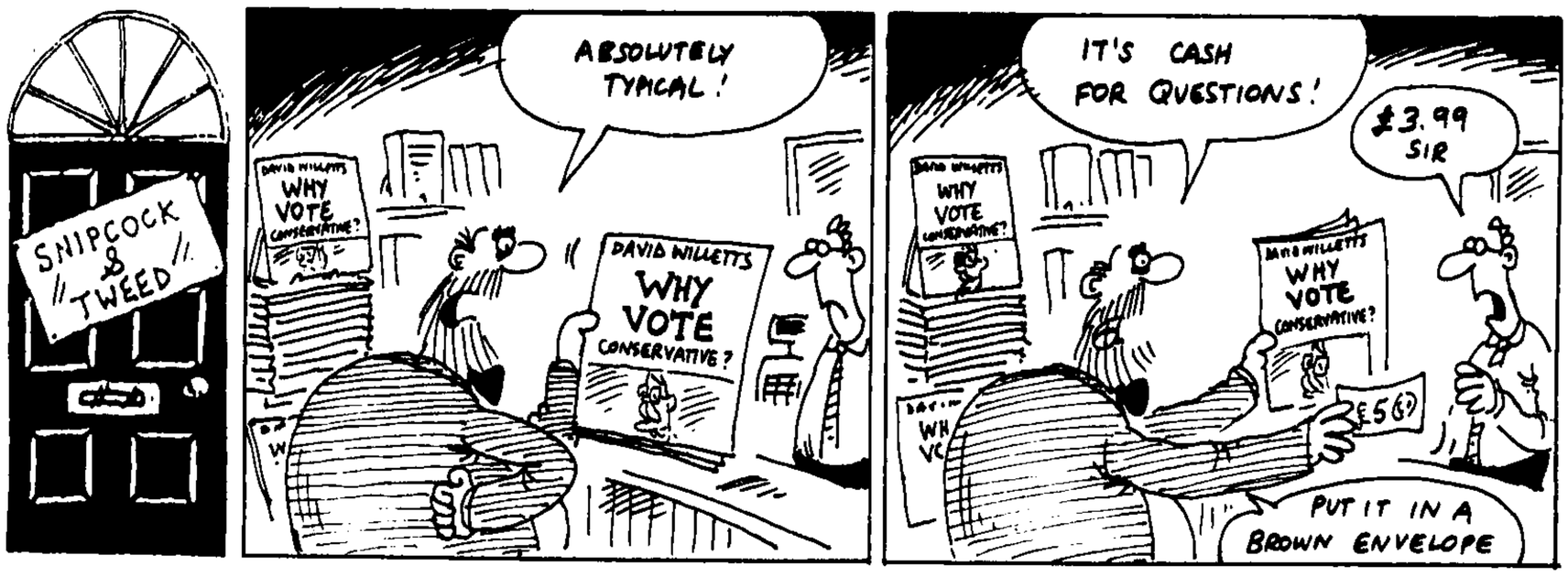
BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ *MOST disastrous book promotion of 1997 so far has been Arrow's effort, devised by Saatchi & Saatchi, for American thriller writer Richard North Patterson.*

Like HarperCollins with its similarly misjudged campaign last year for Martin Amis, Arrow attempted "teaser" advertising — in this case, fake graffiti about a character from Patterson's novel Final Judgement. But with a budget of just £50,000, all the advertising managed was mildly to intrigue a few people, who then moved on and forgot all about it.

The result? Arrow has turned a best-selling author into someone whose highest position on the list this year was number 25.

'Bookworm'



footnotes

WILLY WONKY

WILLIAM WALDEGRAVE, the man who did (or didn't) change the guidelines on the export of arms to Iraq, and who according to the Scott report "designedly misled" the Commons about them, was up to the same tricks a few months later.

His opinion on another arms exports controversy was disclosed recently in an aborted criminal trial curiously similar to the 1992 Matrix Churchill case, whose collapse led to the Scott inquiry.

The story of the trial of Peter Rotheroe and Glynn Rees, chairman and export manager of a Watford company called Unipower, was told in the BBC's *Money Programme* on 16 March. In 1994 the two businessmen were arrested by HM customs and charged with illegally exporting tank transporter parts to Libya in breach of government sanctions against that country.

As in the Matrix Churchill case, the two men argued that the government knew that the transporter parts could have had a military use but had, in the judge's words, put a "blind eye to the telescope". To help prove this, the defence demanded a complete set of government files about export licences to Libya between 1990 and 1994. The ministries were characteristically reluctant to release these files.

Two years after the men were charged, very few documents had been disclosed. When the case finally came to St Albans crown court on 13 January this year, new sets of files kept being produced by the prosecution, and the trial was regularly adjourned for the defence lawyers to look at them. At the end of the first week the prosecution assured the court that there were no more relevant documents.

The following Monday (20 January) an embarrassed prosecution barrister apologised profusely and produced yet another bunch of documents. The defence lawyers were delighted with the new papers, which exposed glaring contradictions in government policy towards Libyan exports in all three departments -- the DTI, the ministry of defence and the foreign office. The double-talk of the civil servants was almost exactly the same as that exposed in the Scott report a year earlier. Of special interest was an opinion expressed with customary delicacy in 1990 by the then minister of state at the foreign office, W. Waldegrave. Between the lines, Waldegrave seemed to suggest that the military sanctions against Libya were mainly for public show and need not be observed too strictly if valuable exports were at stake.

Happily for all three departments (and Waldegrave), none of these documents was aired in court. Judge Colston had run out of patience. "This disclosure," he said, "has come out in dribs and drabs, late in the day, under pressure. I've decided that a fair trial is no longer possible." He stopped the case. The two defendants walked free. HM customs is said to be "steaming" that yet another long and expensive investigation into sanctions-busting has gone down the drain.

CLUBBY MED

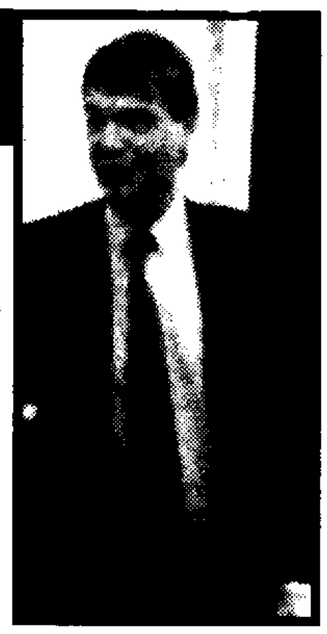
■ ANY day now airliners sporting brand new British Airways livery will be making regular flights to Beirut and Damascus. The airline responsible isn't British Airways, though: it's British Mediterranean Airways operating under BA's franchise.

The new franchise was announced with a flourish last September. Then there was a hitch. In October, the franchise was "suspended" following "certain difficulties". Neither British Airways nor British Mediterranean Airways could tell the *Eye* what those difficulties were.

"That is confidential commercial information," explained a BA spokesman, and British Mediterranean Airways eagerly agreed. Now the mysterious hitch has been mysteriously overcome and the flights can start.

Who owns British Mediterranean Airways? DBA, a PR company which answers press inquiries on behalf of British Mediterranean Airways, told the *Eye* it did not know who owned the company that had hired them. British Airways describes British Mediterranean Airways as "an independently-owned and managed British carrier".

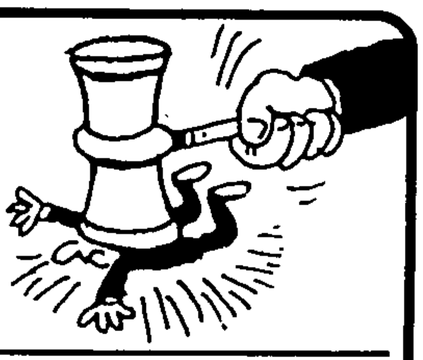
The £50,000-a-year non-executive chairman is Lord "Fatty" Hesketh, a former Tory minister, and a director of British Aerospace and Babcock International (whose president is Lord King, president of British Airways). The main shareholders are two companies called Halton Overseas and Halton International, which are registered in Portola in the British Virgin islands, a tax haven, and Mohtaran Kaddouro, a Lebanese businessman who lives in Rome.



DAVID BURNSIDE

Can anyone help with the name of the company's ultimate owner? Perhaps the most interesting name on the board of directors is that of David Burnside, who was public affairs director of British Airways until he was sacked in an acrimonious confrontation following revelations of British Airways dirty tricks against its rival, Virgin. How sweet for Mr Burnside to be running an airline once again in such warm cooperation with his former colleagues.

Beak of the Week



Miss J. Hayward, JP Manchester

A COMMON view of magistrates dealing with women debtors who have been convicted of prostitution offences is that defaulters have no excuse: they should go out on the streets and earn the money to pay their debts. Such a case is shortly to be heard in the high court.

On 12 July 1995, Karen Ward came up in front of Manchester stipendiary magistrate Miss J. Hayward. Ms Ward had been fined for not having a television licence and for soliciting. She had been ordered to pay off the fines at £12.50 a week. She explained that as a single mother with three children she found it very difficult to keep up the payments out of her income support of £65 a week. She said she was very sorry that she had only been able to pay £237 of the £248 she was supposed to have paid.

The magistrate retorted that Karen had no excuse. She was, after all, quite capable of supplementing her income by working as a common prostitute. She was sent to prison for seven days. After a single night at Risley remand centre, where prison officers are sick and tired of receiving prisoners like Karen, she was put in touch with a lawyer who went back to the magistrates court complaining that Karen's imprisonment was illegal and should be referred to the high court.

The magistrates agreed there was a case to answer and released her on bail. Her case comes to the high court shortly.

Another Privatisation Rip-off

■ THE Employment Service, Britain's second largest executive agency which employs about 40,000 people, decided in the interests of saving money and free competition to privatise its financial accounting operations.

Then it commissioned a detailed report from one of its top civil servants. Whoops! The report, which has been leaked to the *Eye*, concludes: "There are firmly-based doubts over the achievability of significant savings, particularly in the short term. Indeed there is the likelihood of an apparent increase in Employment Service costs."

Oh dear. What about competition? The report says: "CSL is probably the major player in this market, and the competition may turn out to be a one-horse race, with savings not on offer."

So its own report told the Employment Service chiefs that the privatisation would cost the taxpayer more and strengthen a private monopoly. An embarrassed department for education and employment spokeswoman told the *Eye*. "I will not comment on this leaked document — except to say that this was an early draft and things have changed very much since then. We still expect to make savings."

SLEAZY STREET

A charming story to show how the Mother of Parliaments worked in the years of the Great Sleaze

FOUR months before he resigned from cabinet in 1995, as he reeled under media attacks, Jonathan Aitken MP was comforted by a letter from an old friend.

Maureen Tomison was shocked that Aitken's chief accuser was Gerald James, the former chairman of Astra, an arms company. "Gerald James," she wrote on 29 March 1995, "is and was totally bonkers, but unfortunately makes news."

This was a remarkable assessment in view of the long and exuberant business relationship between Maureen Tomison and Gerald James, which the *Eye* can now reveal in some detail and with close regard to the prevailing standards of public life.

Tomison and Gerry

In 1987, Jonathan Aitken suggested to Tomison that she should pitch for a consultancy with Astra, an exciting new arms company in his Kent constituency. Tomison was well qualified to do so. She had been married to Roger Trowbridge, press secretary to former Tory prime minister Edward Heath. She had fought both general elections in 1974. When she lost she devoted her energy to her new leader, Margaret Thatcher.

Now she was starting a new company called Decision Makers. In a letter to Astra, she offered a service "in sharp contrast to that offered by all the other public relations companies I know". Gerald James, Astra's chairman, wrote back to Tomison asking precisely what she "could do for us". The answer came in a long briefing document entitled DECISION MAKERS CAN OPEN DOORS.

"We have a number of Conservative and Labour MPs working as consultants to Decision Makers on a project basis... When Astra Holdings moves to Canterbury your constituency MP will be the newly-elected Julian Brazier, who is already a good friend and contact of the chairman, MT. We understand that Gerald Howarth [Tory MP for Cannock] is a director of one of your subsidiaries."

The letter named as "consultants" Tory MPs Allan Stewart (Eastwood), who went to college with MT, and Robin Squire (Hornchurch). These were balanced by the inevitable Labour lord, former defence secretary of state, the late Fred Mulley, and the inevitable Labour MP, the late Ted Garrett, who suffered throughout his Commons career from a severe case of Itching Palm.

To illustrate her deep political influence, Tomison cited the crisis faced in 1987 by her client Sea Containers, which had too many ships. The crisis, she claimed, could be solved if the government bought up a lot of Sea Container ships and turned them into "amphibious support vessels". To assist in this project, she wrote, "MT approached an old contact of over 20 years, George Younger, now secretary of state for defence...Younger acted quickly... Result: Sea Containers is now in negotiations with government over the terms of a deal. The door has been opened."

Gerald James had lunch with the formidable lobbyist in June 1988. She wrote to him at once. "I greatly enjoyed our lunch and the discovery that we shared so many views about the political scene." The next stage was obvious: a Decision Makers cocktail party in the Commons. On 3 August, she wrote again to Gerald James: "It was delightful to meet up with you again at our party in parliament... We had an excellent evening..." The letter went to claim a "famous victory" for Decision Makers' client, Metair, a subsidiary of the arms firm Hunting, which had been threatened with closure by Kent county council. "We amassed a good deal of support from influential people," she claimed, "including the Prime Minister, an odd Cabinet Minister or two and the national media and forced the local politicians to think again."

A WOMAN OF GREAT IMPORTANCE: Maureen Tomison, an early portrait

Gerald James still needed convincing, however. He was persuaded by Jonathan Aitken MP, who joined the board of Astra's new subsidiary BMARC in August 1988, to invite Decision Makers to BMARC's headquarters at Grantham. Tomison and her boyfriend, fellow-director and former naval officer David Sandford, went there in early October. In an ecstatic letter "on behalf of Maureen and myself", Sandford recalled: "We were allowed to fire your 35mm gun. It was quite an experience."

The war for Rifkind's ear

Almost at once Maureen was off to the Tory party conference in Brighton where she met lots of ministers and "a number of key decision makers in the defence field". At once she wrote in tremendous excitement advising James that a "unique window of opportunity in political terms may have opened for you".

Scottish Tories, she disclosed, were worried about the pending by-election at Glasgow Govan. Their already dismal prospects had been damaged by the announcement that British Aerospace was to close two former Royal Ordnance plants in Scotland. Astra, she suggested, could "score a multitude of Brownie points" from the government if it offered to buy the threatened plants. This idea, she said, had come from "a very keen member of my team" — Allan Stewart, the former Scottish minister, who "will have the ear of George Younger, Malcolm Rifkind and the full party decision-making process".

With the help of an old friend, Keith Simpson, then a "special adviser" at the ministry of defence (and now Tory candidate in the general election at mid-Norfolk) Tomison fixed up a meeting with defence secretary Younger. On 8 November 1988 James and two of his directors flew to Scotland and met Younger in a side hall after he had addressed a by-election meeting. "We just asked him for more contracts," says James today.

Soon afterwards Tomison made a full presentation of her wares to Astra. Her presentation document starts with a "strategy" for persuading the government to break up the British Aerospace monopoly of ammunition contracts — a "strategy" which depended on the support of the prime minister.

"One of our team is an adviser to Mrs Thatcher," she boasted. "There is no one better than Mrs Thatcher and George Younger," she continued, "at selling British defence production abroad." It followed that Thatcher had to be won to Astra's cause. "By using our extensive contacts we can position Gerald James and his directors close to Mrs Thatcher. By making your chairman and chief executive high profile we would be positioning them so that they could be called in to advise Mrs Thatcher, as are, for example, Professor Roland Smith and Sir Jeffrey Sterling. Astra's chairman and directors could become included in Whitehall's inner circle of advisers and gain membership to the great and the good — the hand-picked establishment group which provides members for quangos, advisory committees etc."

Decision Makers staff, moreover, were members of exclusive dining clubs with important members. "We meet Sir Anthony Buck, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Dr Keith Hampson all regularly and will arrange a very early lunch with Michael Mates and the officers of the Conservative Defence Committee. We also meet Archie Hamilton, Minister of State for the armed forces, who as Mrs Thatcher's former PPS also has the Prime Minister's ear."

Tomison cited as an example of her triumphs the success of Sea Link's private bill "on the development of Harwich as a container base". The bill "went through parliament easily". How? "On-site briefing visits, actual ferry trips were arranged for MPs, concessionary travel was offered on Sea Link ferries, MPs were invited to regular lunches/dinners with Sea Link directors. An annual dinner was held by the chairman for all MPs and partners — it became a major bonding exercise."

All the wonders of the Orient

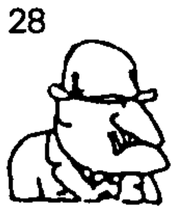
As for journalists and analysts, the presentation continued, they "cannot be bought". On the contrary. "Our story has to be good, but there are journalists and analysts we know today who will always do us a good turn because we took them on the Orient Express".

Maureen Tomison urged Gerald James to buy an advertisement in the programme for the Conservative Winter Ball. "Should you take an ad or contribute in some other way to this function which will be attended by Cabinet Ministers, you will receive an invitation to a party at 12 Downing Street. The party might prove a useful topping up of contracts."

There was nothing for it. Gerald James took out the ad, went to the ball and the Downing Street party, and hired Decision Makers at a starting retainer fee of £25,000 a year. Jubilant, Maureen Tomison organised a sumptuous Astra dinner in a private room at the Royal Horse Guards Hotel, Whitehall. Some 20 MPs attended, including Ann Widdecombe, the new MP for Maidstone, and Ken Warren MP, chairman of the Commons select committee on defence. To Geoffrey Johnson Smith, chairman of the Tory backbench defence committee, she trumpeted: "Astra epitomises all that is best in this government's enterprise philosophy."

A year later, starved of orders by the arms monopolies and accused of spilling the beans about the supergun, Astra and Gerald James were no longer in vogue. Maureen Tomison disengaged herself. With the help of another round of dinners and cocktail parties with important people and Angela Rumbold MP, she secured a new Channel tunnel rail link depot for another client, Blue Circle.

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183



In the City

THE Tory member for Sleaze, Neil Hamilton, has had yet another lucky escape in the run-up to his bid for reelection in Tatton.

First, publication of the Downey report into his dealings with arch corrupter Mohamed Fayed was delayed until after the election by the government's not unrelated decision to end the parliamentary session last month. Now it emerges that Hamilton has escaped further potential embarrassment as a result of an unexpected and unannounced delay in the fraud trial arising from the investigation which indirectly forced his resignation as a minister.

The trial is that of Midlands promoter Clive Smith and three others over Butte Mining and the Montana mines that never were. Butte shares collapsed after the company overpaid for US mining properties. Smith and three former directors of mining consultants Robertson Group were involved in Butte. They all deny charges of deception.

The Hamilton connection concerns gold miner Plateau Mining, which was sold to the public at 90p a share in January 1990 by the Robertson Group, which is based in North Wales not far from Hamilton's Cheshire constituency. Hamilton graced the prospectus as a non-executive director. He remained on the board until promoted to a government whip in September 1990. Plateau was a mining bust. In 1992 its shares were suspended at 3p after losses and write-offs totalled almost £11m. It was renamed after a reverse takeover by a car dealer.

Two years on, Hamilton's connection with Plateau and its links to Robertson, which was well in the Butte frame with Smith, was what forced John Major to insist Hamilton should resign as corporate affairs minister. In the wake of the cash for questions allegations made by Fayed, Major and Hamilton's boss at the Department of Timidity & Inaction, Michael Heseltine, feared (wrongly) that the Butte investigation by the Serious Farce Office would implicate the MP. With the SFO also probing other Smith companies, Major decided this was no time for Hamilton to be the minister for corporate probity. In fact there was no evidence linking Hamilton to Smith or Butte. Major panicked into doing the right thing but for the wrong reason.

However, had the Butte trial started as planned last week then the echoes from the Robertson/Plateau connection and their role in Hamilton's resignation would have been revived and continued to roll on throughout the election campaign. But legal factors dictated that shortly before the election was called the trial had to be delayed. It will now start after the election on 2 June, the same week as a libel trial starts which pits another Tory MP seeking reelection, Jonathan Aitken, the man with the scimitar of truth in one hand and a whip in the other, against Granada TV and the *Guardian*.

LOUD-MOUTHED Tory MP David Evans has become remarkably reticent about his own business affairs. Taking advantage of the loopholes provided for small companies, the MP for Welwyn Hatfield has effectively hidden the amount of tax paid on his outsize outside earnings last year of more than £650,000, which make Evans probably the biggest-earning MP.

Evans' management consultancy fees are paid to a private company Leapsquare (1994). Last year these rose from £402,000 to £641,000. The largest contributor was Broadreach Group, the contract cleaners of which Evans is a major shareholder. It paid Leapsquare £608,000 plus £14,000 to millionaire Evans as chairman.

Naturally had Evans received all this burgeoning consultancy income directly he would have faced income tax at the top rate of 40 percent because of his stipend as an MP. But by having the consultancy fees paid to Leapsquare Evans is able to legally reduce the tax take to a maximum 24 percent corporation tax — a saving of around £100,000.

Just how much tax Leapsquare did pay, however, is not disclosed as the company takes advantage of the small company exemption to produce only abbreviated accounts. But whether the company paid even 24 percent is open to question thanks to a nifty deal the MP did two years ago whereby the original Leapsquare company was taken over by an ailing Evans-backed tennis coaching venture which had lost close to £1m. It is possible that the heavy losses amassed by Bradnam Enterprises, now Leapsquare (1994), could be used to offset some if not all of last year's corporation tax liability on Evans' consultancy earnings. However, for once this is one subject the usually voluble Evans does not want to mouth off about.

THE Tories will be less than amused to hear rumours that their former generous donor Asil Nadir is preparing to crank up the volume possibly ahead of the election. The fugitive is said to be negotiating a TV interview from his Northern Cyprus hideaway which is certain to rehash his life and times as a leading contributor (£440,000) and friend of the party hierarchy. "Operation Protocol" was Nadir's plan to buy a knighthood.

Nadir's memories of his meetings with Mrs Thatcher, Michael Heseltine, Michael Mates and Gerry Malone, to name but a few, will not be welcomed by the party that has still failed to return the money paid from Polly Peck funds but never declared. The money was mostly paid from a Jersey bank account through which Nadir plundered the company.

Nadir's former key aide Elizabeth Forsyth, now freed by the court of appeal, knows all about Nadir's friends in high Tory places and could doubtless corroborate how he was deserted in his hour of need.

A confusion arose over missing brokers in the reference in the last *Eye* to the appeal court's quashing of Forsyth's conviction for handling stolen funds. The appeal judges accused the trial judge of misdirecting the jury over the absence of Jason Davies, not Jonathan Bekhor. The jury had asked the trial judge why Davies had not given evidence.

Their curiosity is not surprising. Davies worked with Forsyth at South Audley Management which ran most of Nadir's private affairs from offices on the other side of Berkeley Square to the Polly Peck headquarters. Davies was instrumental in giving instructions to Bekhor and other brokers to buy and sell Polly Peck shares. These transactions, often booked through offshore brass plate companies, attracted the suspicion of the stock exchange and later the Inland Revenue and the SFO that Nadir was engaged in market manipulation and insider-dealing.

Davies fled Britain after the Polly Peck collapse in 1990 and has remained outside the jurisdiction ever since. He was wanted for questioning by the SFO. Davies was not a witness in the Forsyth trial last year but was much mentioned during the evidence. Bekhor was a potential witness but was not called. A pity as he and others provided much information to investigators regarding the Polly Peck share dealings run from South Audley Management's offices.

NOWHERE, it seems, does history repeat itself more than in Canadian mining shares. Since the 1950s there have been a succession of salted mines, phoney assays and over-hyped share prices which soar only to collapse.

The Bre-X Minerals fiasco in Indonesia comes only a year after the smaller but similar Timbuktu Gold fiasco in Mali. And both were preceded 10 years ago by New Cinch Mines in New Mexico. Yet once again supposed mining experts rushed to proclaim the Bre-X bonanza and investors here and across the Atlantic joined the stampede to load up. Bre-X insiders meanwhile were unloading to the tune of almost £40m.

As ever it could all have been very different if lessons from previous scams had been learned and warning signs not overlooked. The Bre-X samples supposed to prove the mother of all gold mines in the jungles of Indonesia were never subjected to the more rigorous fire assay techniques which could have invalidated much earlier the now highly suspect samples produced by geologist Michael de Guzman, who either did or did not take a dive out of a helicopter just before the truth emerged.

Analysts were sent samples of the riches supposedly awaiting in the jungle as part of the Bre-X hype. They were so excited they never took the opportunity to have the samples tested. When they did these were shown to contain little or no gold! But when it comes to Canadian mining stocks the motto is never to let the facts stand in the way of a good story that sells shares to the greedy with short memories.

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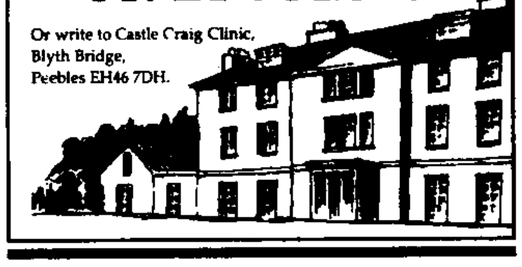

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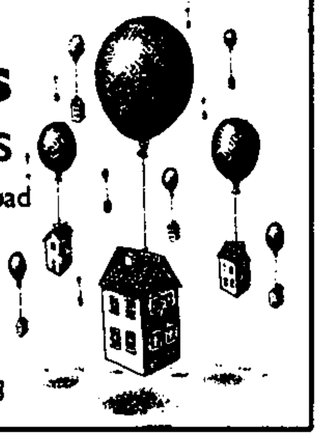

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STEVE DOYLE sad Arabia Gwen/Of you, I'm sure is fond/Does she know you're the wizard/With the one inch wand? Grrr... BREN.

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SURPLICE SARAH — see you in church — 2719.

THANKS St Jude.

MAKE FRIENDS in America — See EYE CONTACT

BBC NEWSREADERS Conspiracy. http://pair.com/spook/

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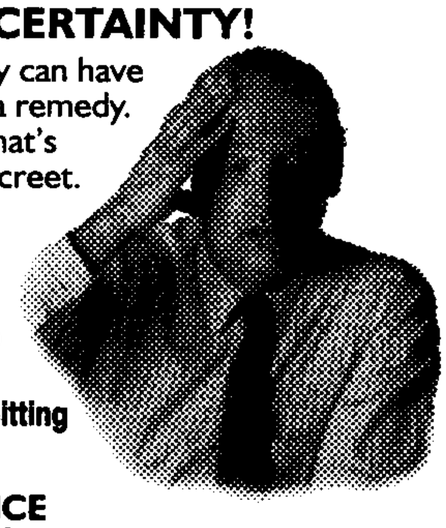

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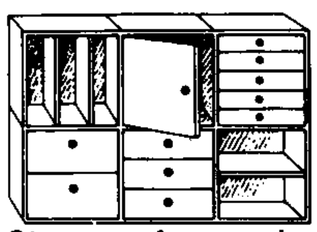

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3. Education

Private / Public ❒ Grammar ❒
Comprehensive ❒
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O Levels / GCSE's ❒ A levels ❒
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4. Your Personality

(tick which traits closely describe you)

❒ Affectionate ❒ Fashionable
❒ Serious ❒ Practical
❒ Considerate ❒ Conventional
❒ Shy ❒ Reliable
❒ Romantic ❒ Adventurous

5. Your Attitudes

(tick for yes, cross for no or leave blank if you don't feel strongly)

❒ Do you prefer town life?
❒ Do you involve yourself with community activities?
❒ Do you have many friends of your own sex?
❒ Are you interested in current affairs?
❒ Are you looking for one special relationship?
❒ Do you like team activities?
❒ Does your work make it difficult to meet new people?
❒ Do you feel resentful when forced to act quickly?
❒ Do you want to extend your social life as well as finding a special relationship?
❒ Do you devote a lot of time to your social life?

6. Your interests

(sections 6. and 7. Please tick for a liking, cross for a dislike or leave blank for no pref.)

❒ Wining/Dining ❒ Jazz/Folk music
❒ Pubs ❒ Classical music
❒ Sports/Keep fit ❒ Theatre/Arts
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7. Details of the partner you would like:

Minimum age:_____ Maximum age:_____
Height: min._____ max._____ Don't mind ❒
Marital status: Single ❒ Divorced ❒
Widowed ❒ Separated ❒
Don't mind ❒
Build: slight ❒ medium ❒ large ❒
Attractiveness:
Very attractive ❒ Attractive ❒ Average ❒

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